

SEVEN

CHURCHES

M. M. NINAN

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Nov 2003

The Seven Churches

A Study of the First Three Chapters of the Revelation to John

**The secret of the seven stars
and
the seven golden lampstands
is this:**

the seven stars are
the angels of the seven churches,
and
the seven lamp-stands are
the seven churches themselves.

M. M. Ninan

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A Study of the First Three Chapters of the Revelation to John

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Chapter 1 - Introduction - Rev 1 v 1

Chapter 2 - Prologue - Rev 1 v 1 -8

Chapter 3 - John' Prologue - Rev 1 v 9 – 20

Chapter 4 - Ephesus - Rev 2 v 1 – 7

Chapter 5 - Smyrna - Rev 2 v 8 - 11

Chapter 6 - Pergamos - Rev 2 v 12 – 17

Chapter 7 - Thyatira - Rev 2 v 18 - 29

Chapter 8 - Sardis - Rev 3 v 1 – 4

Chapter 9 - Philadelphia - Rev 3 v 7- 13

Chapter 10 - Laodicia - Rev 3 v 14 - 22

Chapter 11 - General Analysis

Preface

This study was initially done in 1984 as part of the Bible Study in the University of Juba. Since then it has been revised and used as a study in several countries. During the course of time additional information and insights were added as brought in by the members of the groups. It has been on the internet for over ten years and has attracted attention from scholars from all over the world.

I have added several pictures both painted by me and photographs brought in by friends who took tours to Turkey. These add spice and atmosphere to the content .

Prof. Dr. M.M.Ninan
San Jose, CA
4 August 2005



Dedicated to



Our Daughters:

***Premeela
Preethy,
Anna,
Jennifer***

*Where daughters are groomed to carry the torch and
Daughter - in - Laws are treasured as the source of the fire ;
and*

to our mothers through generations

Mariammas and Sosammas

*who kept the lampstand in its place burning bright since the
time of St. Thomas..*

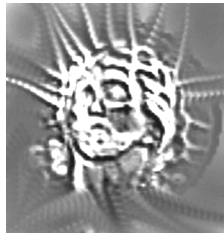
***Dr & Mrs. Ninan
Madathilparampil Family***

THE SEVEN CHURCHES

A Study of the First Three Chapters of the Revelation to John

Chapter One

Introduction



In this series of articles, my intention is to study only the first three chapters of the book of Revelations to John and to see the prophecy in a wider angle. Essentially my focus is on the letters to the seven churches. But to get the picture in focus we need to look into the first chapter which is the prelude and gives the circumstances of the vision.

I. Title

The title comes from the first word in the letter, *apokalypsis*, translated "Revelation". From the Greek word comes the alternative title for the book: The Apocalypse. The Greek word itself means, "to expose that which was formerly hidden, veiled or secret". In the New Testament, it is used exclusively in the religious sense of a divine disclosure.

II. Author and Setting

A. Author

The author of Revelation identifies himself as John in 1:1, 4, 9 and 22:8. This seems reasonable, since the only other Johns we know about in the New Testament are John the Baptist and John Mark, neither of whom seems a likely candidate as the author. The suggestion that it was written by another, otherwise unknown person named John seems too far fetched. We do have the witness of the early fathers in this regard. Jamieson, Fauset and Brown quotes the following authorities.

JUSTIN MARTYR [Dialogue with Trypho, p. 308] (A.D. 139-161) quotes from the Apocalypse, as John the apostle's work, the prophecy of the millennium of the saints, to be followed by the general resurrection and judgment. He says, "the Revelation had been given to John, one of the twelve apostles of Christ." This testimony of JUSTIN is referred to also by EUSEBIUS [Ecclesiastical History, 4.18].

MELITO, bishop of Sardis (about A.D. 171), one of the seven churches addressed, a successor, therefore, of one of the seven angels, is said by EUSEBIUS [Ecclesiastical History, 4.26] to have written treatises on the Apocalypse of John. The testimony of the bishop of Sardis is the more impartial, as Sardis is one of the churches severely reproved (Rev 3:1).

THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH (about A.D. 180), according to EUSEBIUS [Ecclesiastical History, 4.26], quoted testimonies from the Apocalypse of John.

EUSEBIUS says the same of Apollonius, who lived in Asia Minor in the end of the second century.

IRENÆUS (about A.D. 180), a hearer of POLYCARP, the disciple of John, and supposed by ARCHBISHOP USHER to be the angel of the Church of Smyrna, is most decided again and again in quoting the Apocalypse as the work of the apostle John [Against Heresies, 4.20.11; 4.21.3; 4.30.4; 5.36.1; 5.30.3; 5.35.2]. In [5.30.1], alluding to the mystical number of the beast, six

hundred sixty-six (Rev 13:18), found in all old copies, he says, "We do not hazard a confident theory as to the name of Antichrist; for if it had been necessary that his name should be proclaimed openly at the present time, it would have been declared by him who saw the apocalyptic vision; for it was seen at no long time back, but almost in our generation, towards the end of Domitian's reign."

In his work *Against Heresies*, published ten years after Polycarp's martyrdom, he quotes the Apocalypse twenty times, and makes long extracts from it, as inspired Scripture.

TERTULLIAN, of North Africa (about A.D. 220), [*Against Marcion*, 3.14], quotes the apostle John's descriptions in the Apocalypse of the sword proceeding out of the Lord's mouth (Rev 19:15), and of the heavenly city (Rev. 21:1-27). Compare *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* [27]; *A Treatise on the Soul*, [8, 9, &c.]; *The Prescription Against Heretics*, [33].

The **MURATORI** fragment of the canon (about A.D. 200) refers to John the apostle writing to the seven churches.

HIPPOLYTUS, bishop of Ostia, near Rome (about A.D. 240) [*On Antichrist*, p. 67], quotes Rev. 17:1-18, as the writing of John the apostle. Among HIPPOLYTUS' works, there is specified in the catalogue on his statue, a treatise "on the Apocalypse and Gospel according to John."

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (about A.D. 200) [*Miscellanies*, 6.13], alludes to the twenty-four seats on which the elders sit as mentioned by John in the Apocalypse (Rev 4:5); also, [*Who Is the Rich Man Who Shall Be Saved?* 42], he mentions John's return from Patmos to Ephesus on the death of the Roman tyrant.

ORIGEN (about A.D. 233), [*Commentary on Matthew*, in EUSEBIUS *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.25], mentions John as the author of the Apocalypse, without expressing any doubts as to its authenticity; also, in *Commentary on Matthew*, [16.6], he quotes Rev 1:9, and says, "John seems to have beheld

the Apocalypse in the island of Patmos."

VICTORINUS, bishop of Pettau in Pannonia, who suffered martyrdom under Diocletian in A.D. 303, wrote the earliest extant commentary on the Apocalypse. Though the Old Syriac Peschito version does not contain the Apocalypse, yet EPHREM THE SYRIAN (about A.D. 378) frequently quotes the Apocalypse as canonical, and ascribes it to John.

(Jamieson, Fauset and Brown Commentary)

Rev 1:1 The (A) revelation of Jesus Christ,

The definite article 'The' is not in the original usage. The indefinite article "A" is more appropriate here because there were other revelations of Jesus Christ before and after those received by John. Since the Apostolic era ended with John around 100 A.D. the Apostolic revelation naturally ended there. This would mean that the direct verbal revelation of Jesus Christ handed down by word of mouth ended with John. All revelation finds its ultimate realization in Jesus. Jesus is the revelation. Though the disciples were not able to gather and coordinate what had been revealed, their personal experience with the living person of Jesus on the earth is the foundation of our faith. This is indicated in the last sermon of Jesus to his disciples.

John 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Num 12:6 he said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams.

The function of the Holy Spirit was to remind the disciples of what Jesus had already taught. The function of the Holy Spirit is still the same. Holy Spirit does not bring any new revelation except that has already been given to the disciples. In this sense the revelation is closed. Hence Paul's admonition is a serious one.

Gal 1:8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

Today if someone receives a message that is contrary the message found in the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, they are brought in by the evil ones. There is a risk in receiving revelations and prophecy on a day to day basis. It is riddled with risk and the chances of misjudging - by taking the truth as false and the false as truth is very large. It is in this context Jesus told the parable of the wheat and the tares.

Mat 13:24 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away 26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. 27 "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' 28 "An enemy did this," he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 29 "No," he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

New teachings will come everyday, trying to coax people away from the true gospel. This will be with astonishing miracles and hypnotism. Because of this deception it will even attract the elect. Mostly these are associated with emotional involvement without the dimensions of intellect and body. The body and mind are subjugated to the spiritual dimensions and then people enter into alter states of mind and experiences bodily changes. However much, these may look to be from a higher power, we need to look into the real source of these. The best way of testing is simply the scripture itself. The authentic Christian experience is not based on emotional experience alone. It is based on the solid reality of Jesus and his words.

1 John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Even from the times of Moses a standard was set to distinguish between true and false prophets.

Deu 18:20 But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death." 21 You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not

been spoken by the LORD?" 22 If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously.

Every prophecy must contain something that has to happen immediately, even if it was for a long term prophecy. The immediate one will take place confirming the prophet's integrity and authenticity. In those days to be a prophet in Israel was a risky affair. If his prophecy failed, he will be stoned to death.

This test is still valid. If any one of the prophecy fails, the entire prophecy may be rejected.

The other extreme is that scripture is closed, the prophesy is closed; and revelations are closed - knowledge about God has ceased. What has to be known about God is already known to man. Nothing new is to be expected. This is a nice comfortable proposition. If you have a problem, you look into the Bible to get the answer. That is it. I wish it was that simple. But the Bible is not written in that form. Bible does not give pat answers to every human problem. Yet the Bible does give answers to every human problem in its root. It is not a contextual direct answer which can be "cut and paste" to every situation. It is an unfolding of God through history. God is at work in every historical moment, in every culture. Even though the actions and recommendations were different in different situations, underlying them all is the ultimate revelation of God's character and nature.

Heb 1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, :2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

And when the time was ripe God revealed himself through his son Jesus Christ. And that was through an incarnation. Incarnation is a limitation - self imposed by God. How can an infinite being reveal his infiniteness to a finite being? The finiteness lies in limitations of the receiver of the revelation. God has revealed his fullness in Jesus, yet this fullness is beyond the comprehension of man. As such God still continue to reveal the fullness of Our Lord Jesus as an ongoing process. Jesus knew that this was necessary and he had made the provision for it.

John 15:26 "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. 27 And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

John 16:1 "All this I have told you so that you will not go astray.

Notice here that the function of the Holy Spirit is to continue with the testimony of Jesus. But Holy Spirit is not the only testimony we have - we also have the testimony of the disciples. This is the written word of God. Thus we have for a certainty two testaments. One of the Spirit and the other of the Written word. One cannot contradict the other. In this sense the revelation is closed but is progressive. The final revelation is found in Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior. But unfolding of Jesus in the hearts and minds and bodies of people is an ongoing process. Jesus is born everyday in the hearts of men and transforms them. Jesus reveals himself to his children in special ways. The revelation is eternal. Revelation is continuous.

Here in the book of revelations, John received a revelation. But we should know that it is not a new revelation. It was simply a detailed presentation of what was already explained by Jesus himself during his period of residence on earth.

John 5:27 And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. 28 "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

John 12:47 "As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. 48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.

Jesus was talking about the last day. This is implied in his manifesto which was delivered early in his ministry.

Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

This is a quotation from Isaiah. However the full text of the portion is:

Isa 61:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favorand the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.

The underlined portion was not delivered by Jesus at that time, because that was not his ministry during his first advent. This ministry is for the second advent. It is this that John saw in his visions. He set it down in terms he understood. His ability to comprehend things, events, and phenomena were all limited by his time and space and he presented it as best as he could.

Rev 1:1 which God gave him to show his servants

In the Book of Daniel when the vision was given to Daniel he was puzzled.

Dan 12:8 I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?" :9 He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end.

The meaning and details of the end times were sealed to the end of the age.
After the resurrection of Jesus the disciples had a question.

Acts 1:6 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

Now, this revelation was given by God and was given to show his servants what was to come. In the progression of revelation this was the time to give the final revelation regarding Jesus. After many years John was given this vision where God the Father has given the Church the times and the seasons of this event.

The Greek word translated “revelation” here is apocalypse which means “unveiling” or “uncovering”. A new portrait of Jesus is being unveiled before man.

It is the same word that is used in 2 Thessalonians 1:7b-8

Gospel presents Jesus as the “the Lamb of God”, the “meek and lowly” one who was appointed for sacrifice for the sins of the world; the one who went quietly to the cross like a sheep to the slaughter. But here in Revelation Christ is shown to be a different person. He is the “Lion of the tribe of Judah”, the judge of the living and the dead.

Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him. This refers to the events of the second coming which according to Matthew 24:36 ...”But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only.”. But after the resurrection Jesus told them Acts 1:7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. John says that the Revelation came from the Father to the Son who in turn has given it to his servants

Rev 1:1 what must soon take place. The purpose was to show what must soon take place. It is prediction of the coming event. The evident meaning is that the vision concerns the period starting from the end of Apostolic age. This is the Church age. It is in this context the first three chapters finds its importance.

Rev 1:1 -2 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw--that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Having certified the vision on apostolic authority John goes on to give a blessing emphasizing the need for hearing this prophecy. In those days only a few copies of the scriptures and letters were available for the churches and these were read aloud to the congregation. John simply exhorts them to study this because the matter is urgent.

Rev 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Chapter Two

Prologue Rev. 1:1-8

Rev 1:1 ... He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,.....

The revelation was given to John through "his angel" The word angel literally means his messenger. Who was this messenger is not very clear. In the whole Bible angels were employed as messengers. Thus the word angels here could be interpreted in several ways. Very often the one who sends the message is identified as the message, and then the deliverer is identified as the message. So in this context it could be one of the created angels or even Lord himself. In the absolute sense of the word, Jesus is both the giver of the message, the message and the deliverer of the message in his avatar. But this need not be true in all the cases. The word made it known (signified- as in RSV) does not imply a direct communication but the involvement of a medium.

What was the manner of this delivery? As we read through the book we see that in most places he was having a visual experience. In certain places John was actually involved as an active participant. [*Rev 5:4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Rev 5:5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See,...]*

However he was never a participant in the events that took place in space and time. Even though John was right in the midst of the events, he was never directly involved in any action that would produce a consequence or reaction. He is only an onlooker. Time travel only permits that.

Who delivered this? An angel. There is a close parallel between this and the Mosaic revelation. Heb 2:2 indicates that Mosaic laws were spoken by the angels. It is tradition that Moses received the revelations regarding the creation and the past history through the Angel while he was on the mount with God. The description given in Genesis indicates a super method of communication. Moses was in the midst of the events just as John was - as an onlooker.

Rev 1:2 who testifies to everything he saw--

The authorship of this book is clearly claimed by Apostle John. There are many critics who doubt this on the basis of the style of this book. One who reads through the Gospel of John and the letters of John will realize that there indeed is a different style. But if you look deeper into the material here we will see the reason for this difference. John of the Gospel and Letters was a man who saw God as love. These expounded the first Advent of Jesus . These depict a Jesus with a manifesto of: (Luke 4:18-19) " good news to the poor."

Luke 4:19 " to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

In contrast this book is on the second Advent of Jesus where Jesus will come again to declare : " the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, " Isaiah 61:2 This explains the difference in style and method. God in Jesus in his first avatar showed himself as love incarnate. But God is also justice and truth. Love cannot exist apart from truth and justice.

*Exo 34:6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, :7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished;*The reason for this assertion of authorship by John is to validate the authenticity of the revelation because of its very nature. The emphasis is on the importance and relevance of this book.

I have met many good Christian theologians who consider the book of revelation as a dream of a pious old man and nothing more. It is this very concept that is repudiated by John from the very outset. To them it is a wishful thinking of an Old Man at the ripe age of 100, day dreaming of his redemption in circumstance that is beyond redemption. John

was Old and very Old. But his Apostolic authority still remained. He uses his signature of authenticity on to this book without hesitation.

The only difference is that this is another testimony of Jesus and describes another aspect of Jesus.

Rev 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Three blessings are now pronounced on

= ONE who reads the words of this prophecy. The prophecy was to be read in the Churches. Remember that this was the only way a scripture could be made available to the believers in those days. Even now this is the only way it could reach the unreached.

= TWO who hears this prophecy. Don't sleep on it.

= THREE who takes this prophecy into heart. It does not say to understand it, analyze it or interpret it. This is often not possible because of the nature of prophecy. The reason for hearing is to get the basic feeling of the prophecy - viz. The urgency of the time and the readiness for the coming of Christ.

Acts 1:7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. Luke 21:28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

This is why it is important to read, listen and to take to heart.

Rev 1:4 John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia:.....

John now addresses the seven churches that are in Asia. There is no further introduction or story telling. There is an abrupt change. This abrupt change can be understood only in terms of verse 11, where John was ordered to do this. These "seven churches" were located in Asia Minor, which is the present day Turkey.

Rev 1:11 which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches:

to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

There were more than seven churches in Asia Minor at that time. But John was asked specifically to write to these seven churches.

Does that mean this letter is not for us? The introduction says this message was "to show his servants what must soon take place." It is meant for all churches - all his servants - all Christians. Then why this specification of seven churches? These seven churches represents the universal church in space and time.

1. These seven churches were the seven churches in Asia Minor as they existed at the time of John. Probably these seven churches were under the pastorate of Pastor John.

2. These seven churches also represents the various forms of churches as they exist any time in history. It represents the spectrum of church characteristics for all times. Those who are familiar with Mathematical statistics knows that a random distribution of all the population will be normally distributed. A good sampling of the population will exactly duplicate the population in its properties. These seven churches can be distributed about a normal. More of this later.

3. These seven churches also represents the seven church ages as the churches evolved through history. In other words these seven churches are the seven periods in the growth of the church. These letters are the prophecy concerning the church age. These are the things about to happen starting from John's period, "what must soon take place." A historical study will reveal the truthfulness of this fact. We cannot take up this here as it will be voluminous task.

Why is it then addressed to the churches in Asia?

Asia in the Bible represents the gentile world. So we read in Acts. 19:27 "Artemis, she whom all Asia and the world worship". Thus the churches which are in Asia clearly means the churches that are in the gentile world. John is writing to all of us who are the chosen who live in the world. These letters give us guidance and help in our daily conduct of lives as we spend our lives in dispersion in this world among the people who worship Artemis - the sex goddess.

Rev 1:4 John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you

We need this grace and peace as we live our lives in this world. And this is provided by the Trinity. The Trinity consists of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Each one of the Trinity is described in the most fascinating way.

Rev 1:4 John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him

God the Father: who is, and who was, and who is to come. The unchanging I AM - Yhvh. He knows the past, present and the future. Hence we can rely on him.

Holy Spirit: and from the seven spirits before his throne,

Though some people think that this refers to seven angelic spirits which serve before God, the placement of the phrase would not allow us to interpret it that way. The spirit is described in her manifold aspects. The Seven spirits are detailed in Isaiah 11:2

1. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- **[Ruwah-Pneuma.** working in us and through us actually creates the very life of God Himself within us. Through this life giving force we are transformed into His likeness.]



2. the Spirit of wisdom and **[Chokmah-Sophia** is the supernatural intelligence of God which consists of true and right discernment between good and evil. This is the discerning spirit.]

3. of understanding, [**Binah-Sunesis** is the perceptive comprehension of the inner reality beyond outward appearances.]
4. the Spirit of counsel and [**Esa-Boulomai** is God's advocacy, direction, and instruction concerning life and daily living.]
5. of power, [**Gibbor-Kratos** is God's supernatural ability and power]
6. the Spirit of knowledge and [**Daath-Oida** brings us His ability to perceive and know truth.]
7. of the fear of the LORD-- [is the Spirit of holy reverence and respect to the awesomeness and majesty of God.]

This Isaiah verse indicates how the various spirits are but one Spirit of the Lord yet seven. I will not digress to a detailed study of these seven spirits. It will be great study.

The Son

Rev 1:5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

A precise but loaded description is given of Jesus.

1. Jesus is the faithful witness - The Prophet.

Jesus told Nicodemus: *John 3:11 I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. 12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? 13 No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven--the Son of Man.*

2. The first born of (from) the dead -

The first born - The Priest

Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead,

Heb 5:8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered :9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him 10 and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

The title "firstborn" has a rich significance in this passage especially in the Old Testament context. The firstborn son of the patriarchal age was the heir to the majority or all of his father's property, a practice continued in the Mosaic period (cf. Deut. 21:17) and the firstborn inherited the patriarchal rule over the family - he became the head of the tribe. Before the levitical priesthood was established the First Born was to be the Priest to the family. Levites were selected in lieu of the first born and were to be redeemed under the law by payment.

*Num 3:44 And the LORD said to Moses, **45** "Take the Levites instead of all the first-born among the people of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine: I am the LORD.*

Num 3:50 from the first-born of the people of Israel he took the money..... 51 and Moses gave the redemption money to Aaron and his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.

First born from (of) the dead depicts two special aspects.

As the first born from the dead, the first person who came to life after death Jesus is the nucleus of the New Creation. In this sense Jesus was born again - from death into life. All those who are born again enters the Kingdom. The sin of Adam brought in death which continued its hold from generations to generations. This was imposed on mankind because of God's love so that man may not continue to live in misery and suffer due to the ego of man and man, man and the rest of the living, and conflicts within the cosmos that went without consonance and love. The redemption from this bondage of sin and consequent return to the immortality started with the resurrection of Jesus. It was the same Jesus who resurrected. But there were significant difference. He could not be recognized by Mary (Jn 20: 11-18) and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus until Jesus disclosed himself (Luke 24:41-42). Further the resurrected body had transformed

properties that are not in the fallen body. He could pass through solid objects and could move in space without hindrance over several dimensions appearing and disappearing. The property of subtlety and impassability are only two of the observed property of the glorified body of Jesus. The mortal body had put on the immortal. It is this new birth that Jesus brought and He is the first born from the dead for humanity. Thus Jesus is the first born from the dead who started the process of total redemption of man. . So it will be with us after our own resurrection. St. Paul implies this when he writes: "But as it is, Christ has risen from the dead, the FIRST-FRUITS OF THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP. For since by a man came death, by a man also comes resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:20-31).

Colossians (1:18): "Again, he is the head of his body, the Church; he, who is the beginning, the FIRST-BORN FROM THE DEAD, that in all things he may have the first place."

It also signifies the ultimate Priesthood. The Priest according to Levitical regulation should be blameless. Since this was not possible it was ordained "Draw near to the altar. And offer your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and for the people" If these were not done properly it would result in death as the Priest enters the Holy of Holies (See Lev. 8 and 9 and also Heb: 4:14-5:10) Read Hebrews to get a clear understanding of how Jesus became the true High Priest as appointed by God himself. Through his death he entered into the Holy of Holies beyond the veil of death and officiates as our mediator (Heb: 7:11-8:2)

John 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

This being born again is the experience of dying to the world and being resurrected with Christ into the newness of life in the heavenlies.

3. The Ruler of the King of the earth. - The King

1 Tim 6:15 God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.

There are three anointing ordained in the Old Testament for the covenant people - The Prophet, The Priest and The King. In Jesus we have all these three anointing totally fulfilled in one person. In so doing he made all of us inherit these three anointing by the following act.

"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep"

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,"

Rev 1:5 ... To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,

Rev 1:6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father-

He loved us

He freed us

He made us Kings

He made us Priests.

1 Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

The New creation Man is

==Prophet: spirit filled, spirit renewed, spirit controlled.

== Priest: sanctified, soul renewed, God controlled.

== King: Perfected conduct, Perfected body, Jesus controlled.

This is what Jesus made us into. No wonder John bursts out in a volley of praise in the midst of his descriptions.

John breaks out into praise.

Rev 1:7 Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.

Mat 24:30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

This is repeated in almost exact terms in Mark 13:26 and Luke 21 :27

Mat 26:64 "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

This again is repeated in Mark 14:62

In the above cases Jesus is described as coming "on the Clouds" and refers to a heavenly vehicle. In Old Testament the cloud was often used as the vehicle of God. Evidently these were the presence of Jesus. Some examples of this can be seen in the following passages.

Exo 13:21 By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.

Exo 16:10 While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.

Exo 19:9 The LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud,

Exo 34:5 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD.

Lev 16:2 The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.

Num 11:25 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him,

However in this passage we have slight change as "with the clouds" - a spiritual accompaniment is implied it. The same picture is given in Daniel

Dan 7:13 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.

Heb. 12:1 interprets this for us: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses,*

It indicates the presence of other personalities that accompany Jesus in his second coming. This cloud is the cloud of believers who are with him. At the time of the second visible reentry into the planetary orbit of earth, he is coming with all the believers - the church. Jesus is coming with his wife and his spiritual retinue back to the earth from where he took his bride.

In contrast there is mourning on the earth.

They mourn:

they that pierced him - i.e. the Jews
and all the Tribes of the earth .

Why?

Because they rejected the King of Glory, and did not accept him, during the period of grace. Now he come in the clouds with all those who did receive him in joy and triumph. They all had the opportunity to accept him. The gospel must be preached to every nation and tribe. He will come only after that, so that no one may complain that they never had a chance. Now they realize their mistake and they shall mourn.

Zec 12:10 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. 11 On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. 12 The land will mourn, each clan by itself, with their wives by themselves: the clan of the house of David and their wives, the

clan of the house of Nathan and their wives, 13 the clan of the house of Levi and their wives, the clan of Shimei and their wives, 14 and all the rest of the clans and their wives.

"And one will say to him, 'What are these wounds between your arms?' Then he will answer, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.'"
Zechariah 13:6

Will all the Jews come alive to see the second coming? Because of this statement some interpreters believe that the early church believed that Jesus would come back within their life. Otherwise how will this be fulfilled literally? Is it only a figurative way of saying – even the Jews will echo Zechariah?

Jesus himself prophesied this. *Mat 24:30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.*

Zechariah describes this reentry thus: *Zec 14:4 On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. :5 You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."*

Second Coming would take place "after the tribulation of those days". We need to tuck that important detail away in our memory banks.

"The clouds of heaven".

Daniel 7:13-14 "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.

1 Thessalonians. 4:17 "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

What are these "clouds"?

Shekinah Glory

The cloud is the believers. Heb 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses,

Rev 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

Here the message begins. It starts in a manner similar to all covenants of ancient days with the covenant maker - the superior identifies himself before the decree is given. God who is the beginning and the end, the origin and ultimate consummation declares his method and the means of such consummation in this message. He is the almighty who accomplishes what he proposes in spite of the freedom of will he has graciously granted to all creatures. He planned it, he is still active in history so that he will accomplish it.

Presenting the great I AM from the Old Testament symbolism.

The Witness

Rev 1:5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

Isa 55:4 Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples.

Coming with the Clouds

Rev 1:7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him

Dan 7:13 and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

Zec 12:10 ", when they look on him whom they have pierced, ...

I am, Alpha & the Omega

Rev 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty

Isa 41:4 I, the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am He.

Isa 44:6 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god

Isa 48:12 "Hearken to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am He, I am the first, and I am the last.

Golden Lampstands

Rev 1:12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands,

Zec 4:2 And he said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps which are on the top of it.

The Great High Priest

Rev 1:13 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast;

Dan 10:5 I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with gold of Uphaz.

Sword from the Mouth,

Rev 1:16 in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

Isa 49:2 He made my mouth like a sharp sword

Chapter Three John's Prelude

St. John the Evangelist



The young John

oil on canvas, by El Greco (1594-1604)

John was the son of Zebedee a wealthy Fisherman of the sea of Galilee. His mother was Salome [Matthew 4:21, 27:56; Mark 15:40, 16:1] who was also a close follower of Jesus right from the start of Jesus' ministry. The elder brother of John, James was also a disciple of Jesus. John was probably a cousin of Jesus and was also in the same age group which made him a close friend of Jesus on whom Jesus came to rely in times of need. The mention of the "hired men" [Mark 1:20], and of John's "home" [John 19:27], implies that they belonged to the aristocracy.



John and James were disciples of John the Baptist when he preached repentance in the wilderness of Jordan. Some do think that John the Baptist came away from the Essene group and preached a non-extremist message which looked beyond the world. There can be little doubt that the two disciples (whom John's Gospel does not name) in John 1:35 who followed Jesus immediately after the prophetic declaration of the Baptist "Behold the Lamb of God!" were Andrew and John.

Joh 1:37 And the two disciples heard him speaking, and they followed Jesus. 38 But having seen them following, Jesus said to them, What do you seek? And they said to

Him, Rabbi (which being translated is called Teacher), where do You stay? :39 He said to them, Come and see. They went and saw where He stayed, and they remained with Him that day.

As such John was one of the first disciples of Jesus who were with Jesus for his entire time of ministry beginning with the miracle of the water turned into wine. He became one of the inner circle of Jesus – Peter, James and John – who witnessed the glory of Jesus before anyone else at the Mount of Transfiguration. [Mark 5:37, Matthew 17:1, 26:37]. The mother of James and John, knowing our Lord's love for the brethren, made special request for them, that they might sit, one on his right hand, the other on his left, in his kingdom [Matthew 20:21].

The two brothers must have been very zealous and loud and vivacious that they inherited the nickname of Boanerges, Sons of Thunder [Mark 3:17, see also Luke 9:54]. At the important new covenant ceremony of Last Supper where people were normally placed in accordance with their status, John evidently got a seat next to Jesus indicating his privileged status within the community. It was to John, Jesus entrusted his mother from the cross. [John 19:27]. John was the "disciple whom Jesus loved" and probably was the first to believe that Jesus was indeed resurrected while others were perplexed at the empty grave clothes.

John remained in Jerusalem and was present at the first Ecumenical Council of Jerusalem which discussed the question of circumcision and the position of Gentiles in the Church [Acts 15:6]. Tradition indicates that John moved to Ephesus taking with him Mary, mother of Jesus in obedience to his master's wish. During the period of persecution John protected Mary from the ravages by removing her to Panaghia Kapulu (Bülbül Dag, Nightingale Mountain) .

Irenaeus says that John did not settle at Ephesus until after the death of Peter and Paul. Jerome says that he supervised and governed all the Churches of Asia. This date can be as late as 97 AD. Tertullian and in Saint Jerome refers to a story [Eusebius the Church historian do not mention this.] where during the persecution of Domitian John was taken to Rome, and was placed in a cauldron of boiling oil, outside the Latin gate. The boiling oil could not burn him. He was sent in exile to the labors of the mines in Patmos. At the accession of Nerva he was set free, and returned to Ephesus. He is said to have made

his last sermon of three words in Ephesus, "Love One Another" and died at the age of 100.

He is represented holding a chalice from which issues a dragon, as he is supposed to have been given poison, which was, however, innocuous. Also his symbol is an eagle.

He was buried in Ephesus. In the 4th century Byzantines built a small church over his tomb and finally in the 6th century Justinian I built a cathedral which was destroyed by the Arab raids between 7th and 8th centuries. Today his grave stands in Selcuk, nearby Izmir, in the Aegean region of Turkey.

On Bulbul Dag (Nightingale mountain) there is the **House of the Virgin** where it's believed that Mary mother of Jesus spent her last years of her life and where she died. Mary came to Ephesus with John and taken up to Panaghia Kapulu mountain to escape from the Roman persecution. The House was destroyed by earthquakes. It was discovered in 1951. The House of Virgin Mary is renovated by George Outman Foundation from Ohio and serves as a small church today.



House of Mary

Meryemana



The Cave of Apostle John



St. John's Monastery in Patmos

Rev. 1:9

Rev 1:9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

only apostle who died of old age and a natural death. This echoes the prophecy of Jesus in John 21:22

John 21:22 Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me."23 Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"

I presume that the implication is that if the intermediate church age was not ushered in Jesus would have been on the earth by A.D. 100.

John could have certainly written, "I, John, the Apostle of Jesus, whom Jesus loved most and Rt. Rev. Yohannes, The Arch Bishop of the Great Bishopric of Asia Minor." No. He writes "I John, your brother."

This difference shows how early church was built not on human authority or clerical autocracy. Christians as a whole was under a severe persecution and there was no special credence for a Bishop as there were no code of behavior in war in this battle. As in the times of John we are all partakers of three things.

1. Tribulation. All Christians will have tribulation.

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

2. Kingdom. We all have the citizenship of a Kingdom which is not of the World, but in this world.

Luke 12:32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."

3. Patience. This is the result of the first two:

James 1:2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,

Having identified the visionary, the circumstances of the vision is presented now:

Rev 1:10 On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,

This is a double-edged sword. It has two possible meanings at the same time:

1. John was on Lord's Day - on a Sunday

"In the Spirit" is a typical word of the Prophets who saw visions. Thus we have

2 Chr 24:20 Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah

Ezek 11:5 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon me, and he told me to say:

2 Pet 1:21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

On the first day of the week Christians meet to worship and break bread together and have fellowship. Prayer times are times of visions because God gives his people prophecy in the spirit. This is shown in Old and the New Testament periods.

Dan 9:21 while I was still in prayer, Gabriele, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice.

Acts 10:9 About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. 10 He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. 11 He saw heaven opened.

The experience of trance and visions were common in the Old and the early New Testament periods. Later in the church age these experiences were lost. Trances are common in all religions, especially in the eastern and mystic religions. But that is no reason to throw the baby with the bath tub. Evidently prophetic experience can be under the possession of Holy Spirit, Good spirits and the evil spirits. Discernment and not denial that is necessary here.

2. The second meaning arise out of the fuller and wider meaning of the phrase, "The Lord's Day". The Day of the Lord is the end of the ages after the period of gentiles. Thus we have Isaiah speak of a day:

Isa 2:12-17 The LORD Almighty has a day the LORD alone will be exalted in that day,

Isa 13:9 See, the day of the LORD is coming --a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger--

Jer 46:10 But that day belongs to the Lord, the LORD Almighty--

This Lord's day is referred to in Jer. 46.10, Ez 7.19, Joel 1.15-2.31 etc

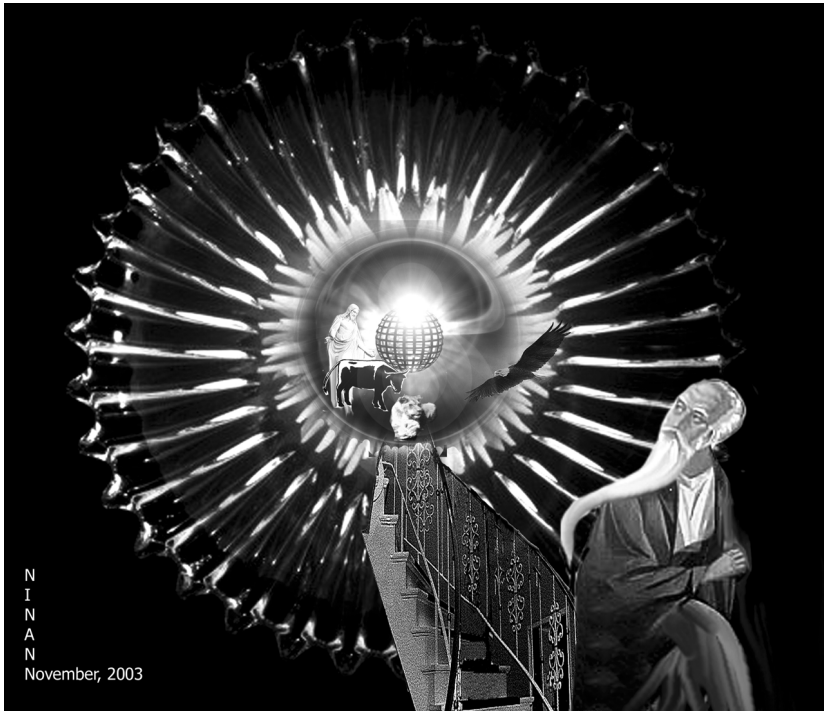
Thus we have the clear picture now. On a Sunday John was in a trance and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in a mighty way. He was transported in time and space to the end of the gentiles into the Lord's Day, where he heard a sound behind him. He turns back into time and sees the vision - the history of the church period spread before him starting from the Apostolic Age to the end of the Ages.

This experience of being transported in space and time was experienced by prophets through the ages. Thus Ezekiel was transported to the Bank of the Chebar from Palestine by the Spirit.

Ezek 3:14 The Spirit then lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit, with the strong hand of the LORD upon me. 15 I came to the exiles who lived at Tel Abib near the Kebar River. And there, where they were living, I sat among them for seven days--overwhelmed. 16 At the end of seven days the word of the LORD came to me:

Phillip the evangelist was transported from the desert road to Azotus.

Acts 8:39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. 40 Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea



. Paul was taken up into Paradise - the Third Heaven.

2 Cor 12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know--God knows. 3 And I know that this man--whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows-- 4 was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.

Such intra dimensional travel seem to have been a regular feature of the Prophets and is done in the Spirit. If dimensional jumps in space and time travel cannot be achieved in nature by man it is because our sciences are limited to the four dimensional continuum.

Rev 1:11 which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

John is now ordered to write all that he sees and send it to the seven churches named.



These churches are in Asia Minor and formed the various parishes of John. It probably is given in the order in which John visited them in a circuit as can be seen from the map below:

There were however four other townships where there were flourishing churches at that time - Milletus, Magnesia, Herapolis and Collosea. (These were also visited by Paul in his circuit) But these are not included in the list. Why were these omitted and only seven are mentioned.? On the nature of revelatory symbolism, it indicates the special prophetic meanings of the number 7 which are used in abundance through out the Bible. This will merit a special series of study.



Rev 1:12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lamp stands,

The seven lamp stands evidently represents the seven churches. Jesus is in the midst of them. Lamp stand represents the churches whom he has left behind as witnesses.

Mat 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses

n the Old Testament the lamp stand in the Temple was a seven pronged stand. Now the lampstand has split into seven different stands so that it will fill the earth. Israel was meant be the light to the nations. It was therefore concentrated as one lampstand in the temple in Israel. But Israel failed to evangelize and when the new Israel was formed, the lamp was no longer a seven pronged single stand, but seven different stands - indicating a scattered church in the midst of the gentiles. Early church had the tendency

of remaining concentrated in Jerusalem. They formed a community of self help. But that was defeating the purpose and so Lord scattered them into all parts of the world by bringing in persecution.



Rev 1:13 and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.

Rev 1:14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.

Rev 1:15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.

Rev 1:16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

But Jesus is still in the midst of them. He is the Lord of the Church. He did promise his presence till the end of the age.

It is strange that Jesus retained his human form even after resurrection. It shows that in the totality of the Kingdom of Heaven, in the vast inter-galactic, inter-dimensional civilization God man has a special place. The Jesus whom John knew and described in the gospel is not the same Jesus whom John met now. The Jesus of the gospel is the forgiving loving merciful person, but now he is seen in glory. John had seed this glory once in the mount of transfiguration. But this was much more awesome. It was difficult for John to exactly explain what Jesus looked like. This was therefore given in such terms as "like" "was like" etc. An abstract impressionistic painting is given to us. If you would try to paint this picture on a canvass, it will be an impossible task and will result in a figure far different from the figure of man - yet he was "like a son of man". Here is the picture:

someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.

His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

"One like the Son of Man".

Certainly who John saw was human but not just any human for this was the "Man" from Daniel's vision in Daniel 7, whose exact title John uses.

"I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him

near before Him." Daniel 7:13

This title is a well-recognized name for Messiah and emphasizes Christ's humanity. When the "Son of Man" came and lived among us he took upon himself flesh. He truly became one of us. As you have it in Hebrews 2:14, 16-17... "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil," "For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

Luke is the gospel that emphasizes Christ's humanity. There, Jesus repeatedly refers to himself as the "Son of Man".

" for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10

I saw seven golden candlesticks. The first things seen when he turned to see whence the voice came were the seven golden candlesticks, which symbolized the churches (Rev 1:20).

And in the midst. It is a beautiful thought that he who said "I will be with you always" is represented as moving in the midst of the church.

Like unto the Son of man. A term used in Dan 7:13 and applied by the Savior to Himself, but never applied to him by the New Testament writers except here, Rev 14:14 and in Act 7:56.

A garment down to the foot. The long robe of a high priest girt about with the golden girdle of a king. Hebrews 5:6 ... "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

"girded about the chest with a golden band - King of the Jews. "King of kings" that Daniel saw in Daniel 7:14 ... "Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His

dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."

His head and his hair were white. White is the color of purity and of triumph. The idea here is not age but heavenly glory. The Ancient of Days.

His dress

The total picture of Mesia the King. Clothed with a gown of royalty, girded in gold. He is also represented as the ancient one with hairs white as wool, white as snow, a 2000 year old man, who has defied decay and death. This is the same vision Daniel had.

Dan 7:9 "As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze.

His eyes

His eyes were like fire - searching and consuming fire. The tenderness and mercy which characterized the Jesus on the cross is gone. The period of grace is ended.

Jer 17:10 "I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."

Heb 4:13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and lay bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

His feet

These feet speak of judgment. "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." John 5:22-23

His feet were like unto burnished brass, strong and solid to destroy and to trample as described in Is. 63:1-6

Isa 63:1 Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? :3 "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. 4 For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come. 5 I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. 6 I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground."

His voice was like the sound of many waters.

Water in the Bible refers to the Holy Spirit and the word. But here the usage is in plural. When used in plural as Waters, or sea it refers to the nations of the world - people of the world. Here Jesus' voice was like many waters, above the voice of all people gathered together. The voice of King of the Worlds. This is the Law which flows out of his mouth. It is also shown in the double edged sword that proceeds from his mouth.

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart

From his mouth procedeth the two edged sword Isa 11:4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

Rev 1:17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

Even John, who claimed to be the one whom Jesus loved, one who leaned into the bosom of Jesus felled down at his feet. This is a new revelation - a new aspect which he did not know before. He was told in parables earlier. When he met Jesus, the awesomeness was overpowering.

When I first began to paint the picture of this vision taking the description as it is and with my Indian heritage I came up with the most horrifying image as shown below.



This is not the Jesus we are familiar with. Jesus we know was always compassionate, kind and loving. He would put out even a smoking ember. But instead this vision was that of a fierce judge who will recompense the guilty with severe punishment.. He had the double edged sword coming out from his mouth!! No wonder John reacted with fear and trembling.

Rev 1:17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

**Rev 1:18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!
And I hold the keys of death and Hades.**

Yet the touch of Jesus was the same. It was reassuring. Then Jesus explains to him what he is seeing. This is the new revelation of Jesus- the complete picture.

I am the First and the Last. I am God. I am the creator of the Universe. I am the purpose of the creation. Everything finds its ultimate purpose in Jesus

I am the Life. Even though I came down as man and died, I am alive and because I live all men may live. The keys of death and Hades are with me. The key is simply the faith in Jesus.

Chapter Four

EPHESUS Rev 2: 1-7

Rev 2:1 To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks:

Rev 2:2 I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false;

Rev 2:3 and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary.

Rev 2:4 But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love.

Rev 2:5 Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.

Rev 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Rev 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

The name Ephesus means "desirable, full purposed or the city of the moon".

It is situated on the sea coast and was the center of a flourishing sea trade acting as the center of the traffic between East and West. It was a big city governed by itself. It was also a religious center having the famous temple of Artemis which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Goths destroyed it in AD 262 along with the entire city.

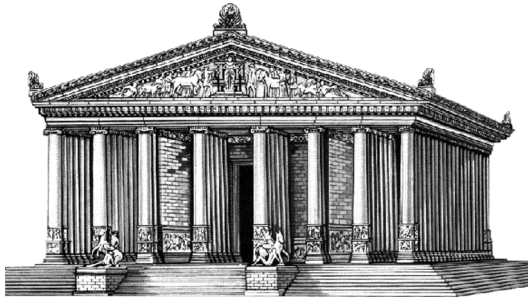


Artemis

Artemis is the Greek name for the moon goddess Diana of Rome. Sometimes she is represented as being covered with breasts, a symbol of fertility, lasciviousness and sexuality. Twin sister to Apollo, she was goddess of chastity, virginity, the moon, and the natural environment. She was also the chief hunter to the gods and goddess of hunting and of wild animals, especially bears. She is the daughter of Zeus and Leto.

The Temple of Artemis

The Temple of Artemis was built around 8th c. B.C. and was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. And there is no doubt that the temple was indeed magnificent. "I have seen the walls and Hanging Gardens of ancient Babylon," wrote Philon of Byzantium, "the statue of Olympian Zeus, the Colossus of Rhodes, the mighty work of the high Pyramids and the tomb of Mausolus. But when I saw the temple at Ephesus rising to the clouds, all these other wonders were put in the shade."



Artist view of the Temple of Artemis

At 356 B.C. it was burned down by a lunatic called Herostatus because he wanted his name to live in history. It was then rebuilt with all the magnificence and wealth of the city by the architect Scopas of Paros, one of the most famous sculptors of his day. Ephesus was one of the greatest cities in Asia Minor at this point and no expense was spared in the construction. According to Pliny the Elder, a Roman historian, the temple was a "wonderful monument of Grecian magnificence, and one that merits our genuine admiration." Pliny recorded the length of this new temple as 425 feet and the width as 225 feet. 127 columns, 60 feet in height, supported the roof. According to Pliny, construction took 120 years. Alexander the Great came to Ephesus in 333 B.C., the temple was still under construction. He offered to finance the completion of the temple if the city would credit him as the builder. They tactfully replied that "It is not fitting that one god should build a temple for another god."

The temple of Artemis was an imposing structure over a large area of several acres of land housing everything from a market place to sex trade. It was an asylum for criminals. It was a market place excelling any supermarkets, where one can find anything. Heraclitus, the great philosopher who lived in that city calls it "Asia's foremost city" and declared that "one cannot live in this city without continually weeping over its immorality". In the midst of this was a church. The temple was the center of pilgrimages. Businesses grew around the temple with sales of miniature Artemis idols and other services. Demetrius, mentioned in the Acts of Apostles chapter 19 was one of these business men that gave St. Paul a difficult time when he visited the city in 57 A.D. (Act 19)

In 1863 the British Museum sent John Turtle Wood, an architect, to search for the temple. After many years of toil and stress, in 1869, he hit the bottom of a muddy twenty-foot deep test pit and found the temple that was long lost. The remains of some of the portions were shipped to British Museum where they can be viewed even today.

Today the site of the temple is a marshy field. A single column still remain to remind visitors of a temple that once was.



Paul, Appolos, Priscilla Aquilla and John were the early builders of this church in Ephesus. This was John's home town to his end where he returned from Patmos and died a natural death..

Mary of the Great

It was at Ephesus that the Christian church declared Mary to be the "the God-bearer" in 431 A.D. This move was intended to legitimize Christianity in the eyes of the people of Asia Minor. Prior to 431 A.D Mary was not recognized by the Christian church.



Goddess's titles were taken, and declared to be the titles of Mary, including; "Queen of Heaven", "Divine Virgin", "Mother of All". Ephesus was chosen for Mary's installation to add legitimacy to the church's claim that Mary, not Diana, was "the Mother of God", the "Mother of All."

The Virgin Mary's House

It is known with certainty That the Virgin Mary went to Ephesus and lived there for some time. Whether or not she died in Ephesus was not known until Anne Catherine Emmerich's vision. The stigmatized German nun who had never been to Ephesus had a vision of the House of the Virgin Mary and described it in detail to the German writer Clemens Brentano. Catherine Emmerich died in 1884. In 1891 Paul, Superior of the Lazarists from Izmir read about her vision and found a little building which corresponded with **Emmerich's** descriptions. Archeological evidence showed that the little house was from the 6C AD but that the foundations were from the 1C AD. This place was officially declared a shrine of the Roman Catholic Church in 1896, and since then it has become a popular place of pilgrimage. Pope Paul VI visited the shrine in 1967.

Jesus introduces himself as:

Rev 2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:

The seven stars are the future of the church. Jesus holds the seven stars in his hands. He is the guardian of all these churches. He is the Lord of these churches.

Rev 2:2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.

Rev 2:3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

Rev 2:4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.

He commends them for their active orthodoxy, their toil, patience and intolerance of evil and opposition to false doctrines. In the process of building up a church they lost their first love - the depth and desire was lost. In the process of building an institutional church capable of withstanding the ongoing evil they lost their priorities - Jesus was not given the prominence. The superstructure was built up. We can see this even today in the growth of any church. When the church begins the people are so enthusiastic and filled with love for each other and the life of the church is centered on Jesus. As time goes on, legalism and superstructures became necessary and eventually they miss the centrality of Jesus and remained as an edifice of structure at the building level and the social level. It does not mean that the buildings and structures and social activities are evil or unnecessary. It should not deter the love within the community and the love for Christ.

Rev 2:6 But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Nicolaitan heresy is an extreme form of Gnosticism which was rampant during the Apostolic Age. They taught that, since their bodies were physical, it did not matter what the body did. So they resorted to indiscriminate sexual relations and did whatever they liked with their bodies. Iraneas reports that the sect was so called because their leader was Nicolaos. Sex is even today a potential danger of close loving Christian communities. We can foresee the growth of cults like the Children of God and others in the Nicolaitan teachings.

This name has another meaning.

Nico = ruler.

Laitan = of the Laity

So Nicolaitan would mean ruler of the laity. Hence this may indicate the growth of the supremacy of the clergy in the church. The rise of the Priesthood in Christianity is a copy of the Priesthood in the Roman pagan religion. These cultural traditions were mixed with Aaronic Priesthood and were readopted into the institutional churches. There is nothing wrong in the adoption of cultural setup into Christian Institutionalization as long as it does not produce a basic contradiction in the theological basis of Christian faith. In this case as time went on clergy slowly became the rulers and took over spiritual authority in contrast to the royal priesthood of all believers. This essentially is the difference of opinion of evangelicals with the orthodox and Roman Catholicism.

1 Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Jesus reminds them of their honeymoon period, when all was sunshine and joy and exciting. Return and do the first works was his advise.

Rev 2:5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.

The reinstatement consists of three parts:

**Remember
Repent
Do**

All conversions have these three parts.

**Remember your past.
Repent of your mistakes.
Turn around and actively practice.**

In the conversion of a sinner to saint these three steps are necessary.

**Know you are a sinner.
Repent of your sin.
Accept Jesus as savior and actively confess him with your lips.**

The reinstatement of broken family relation is likewise comes in three steps.

**Remember your honeymoon period
Repent or desire to get back
Change your ways.**

This is the prescription of Jesus for today's broken relationships not only with him but also within the family and the community as a whole.

If you love Jesus promises life and paradise.

Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

The Tree of Life - What is the Tree of Life?

The phrase occurs only 11 times in the Bible out of which 4 are from Proverbs. And 3 from Genesis and 4 from Revelations.

(Gen 2:9 NIV) And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground--trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

(Gen 3:22 NIV) And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."

(Gen 3:24 NIV) After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

(Prov 3:18 NIV) She (Wisdom) is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed.

(Prov 11:30 NIV) The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.

(Prov 13:12 NIV) Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

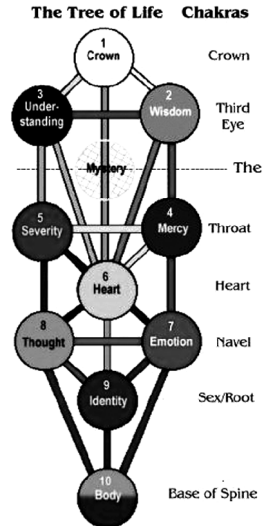
(Prov 15:4 NIV) The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit. (Rev 2:7 NIV) He, who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

(Rev 22:2 NIV) down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

(Rev 22:14 NIV) "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

(Rev 22:19 NIV) And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy,

God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.



Tree of life is a state of existence which is the result of total healing – redemption. And is an ongoing process of healing. Evil is still possible but are dealt with. Thus we are led back to the Garden of Eden. After having tasted the Tree of the Good and Evil we have been redeemed back into the original state in the presence of God with the Trinity –as partakers in the divine nature joined in marriage with the Son. Some early fathers did think that the free will and evil that ensued were part of the process of making Man like his Father. The fall and the subsequent state of existence with pain and suffering are a part of the process till we attain the full stature of Jesus.

Having a part in the tree of life means living forever. Each of the seven letters to the seven churches have a "to him who overcomes" statement, leading us to a study of salvation

The above diagram represents the Jewish mystic concept of Kabala Tree. It is a representation of cosmos in which wherein the redemption is attained when the

being reaches the top of the tree. The fallen beings start from the root – the material kingdom and climbs over the tree and takes up various root. The fruit of the tree is at the top, which is the “Crown” which is in the divine realm. This was the fruit that was available to Adam in the Garden of Eden. Now we can attain it through the same route of faith. The way of work struggles through the paths and in that process get lost. In that sense the tree of life is the cross itself.

1John 5:4-5 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world <our faith. And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

What are we to overcome? The world.

How? By our faith in Jesus Christ

This is true of the love of husband and wife also. With love, marriage becomes a heaven. It is verily a tree of life and a paradise. If this is true of earthly marriage how much more is it true of spiritual love. It is this marriage between the church and Jesus that is going to bring forth the tree of life and paradise. The marriage on earth between the husband and the wife is but a foretaste of the ultimate union of Church with Christ as Paul indicates. (Eph 5: 21 - 32). In fact paradise is where love is. Hell is where hate is, where selfishness is. The hell and heaven are decided on the basis of relationships and not on the basis of a place somewhere or material possessions. Jean Paul Sartre has vividly described heaven and hell as identical banquet halls. Banquet is spread over the table and people sit around it. But they all have long spoons and forks tied to their arms. In the hell they found it impossible to feed themselves and they all starved. They cursed and screamed and were famished. In the heaven the situation is the same. But they were well fed and nourished because in their love they fed each other. Love is the key to heaven. Marriage in human society is the foretaste of the great marriage of Church with Jesus.

History tells us that Ephesus did get back for a while and was commended for their brotherly love by Ignatius in the second century. But they did not stay there. In AD 262 Goths destroyed the city. A council of Bishops were held in Ephesus in AD 431 which ratified the council of Nicea. But Christianity fell at the onslaught of Islamic invasion. Turks followed Arabs and finally came the Mongols in 1403. Today the city's once famous sea port is only a marsh, covered with reeds. The village has a few Christians who do not know Paul, Peter or John. The candlestick was removed.

Rev 2:5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

This church describes the state of affairs of the Apostolic era from AD 30 to AD 100. John died in AD 100. This is the period also described in the parable of the Sower. The word was sown and it encountered real physical situations. Some yielded 100, some 60 and some 30 fold.



Ancient Ephesus

This market area is known as the "Square Agora" because of its dimensions 360 ft square. It arose in the Hellenistic period and was surrounded on all sides by arched shops about 40 ft deep. It is located next to the harbor and was the city's main commercial center. It is quite possible that Paul worked here with Priscilla and Aquila in their tent-making business.



Library of Celsus

Originally built in 115-125 A.D., this restored facade is a highlight of the ruins today. This style is believed to be the standard architectural form for Roman libraries. The interior measures 70 by 80 feet and held approximately 15,000 scrolls.

This library was dedicated to Celsus the proconsul of Asia and his sarcophagus was located under the apse.

Terrace Houses



From the time of Augustus, these dwellings of wealthy Ephesians, were decorated with beautiful frescoes and mosaics. The houses had luxurious bedrooms, bathrooms, triclinium, and kitchens. These are multistory houses with terraces.

Theater



Originally holding 25,000 people, this theater was built in the Hellenistic period and was renovated by several Roman emperors. Designed for theatrical performances, later alterations allowed gladiatorial contests to be held here. When Paul was accused of hurting the Artemis and her temple, the mob gathered together in this theater (Acts 19:23-41).



Curetes Street



Ephesus Columns



Lower Agora Entrance



Agora Columns

Chapter Five

SMYRNA (IZMIR) Rev 2: 8-11

Rev 2:8 And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things saith the first and the last, who was dead, and lived again:

Rev 2:9 I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and they art not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

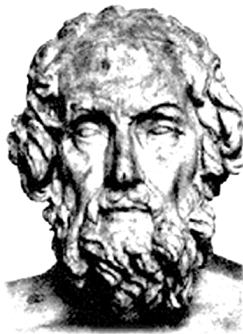
Rev 2:10 Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.

Rev 2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death



Smyrna was a small city about 35 miles north of Ephesus. It was a city built by the hill Pagus with the most safest of all harbors in Asia. In AD 178 it was destroyed by an earthquake and was built again by the best town planners of that time. It was a planned city. It was originally peopled by the Asiatics known as the Lelages. The city seems to have been taken from the Lelages by the Aeolian Greeks about 1100 BC; there still remain traces of the cyclopean masonry of that early time. In 688 BC it passed into the possession of the Ionian Greeks and was made one of the cities of the Ionian confederacy, but in 627 BC it was taken by the Lydians. During the years 301 to 281 BC, Lysimachus entirely rebuilt it on a new site and surrounded it by a wall. Its modern name is Izmir. But at John's period, the city was called

It was famous for its schools of science and medicine, and for its architecture. It was a rich city and was the center of culture and learning. It was the home of Homer of Iliad, the world's earliest classical poets of the Greek literature.



Homer

On the slope of Mt. Pagus was a theater which seated 20,000 spectators. In the 23 AD year a temple was built in honor of Tiberius and his mother Julia, with the Golden Street connecting the temples of Zeus and Cybele.

The Great Mother goddess, Cybele, whose temple was located on the eastern side of the city, was Smyrna's patron deity. Often pictured on Smyrna's coins, she was regarded as

the divine being who was especially responsible for the well-being of the city. Fertility, health, and protection were among the benefits she was said to provide. She was the "Mother of All"



They worshipped the Emperor as God. Smyrna was well known for its fidelity and loyalty to the Emperor. The emperor worship was probably the greatest challenge to the early Christians. In the richness of the city there was a small poor church. The demands of Emperor Worship made their life difficult. Romans hated Christians because they refused to sacrifice to Caesar. So the Jews found an opponent in Christians and they reported them to the Rome. It was an easy way to blot out the infant church - "the heretics" according to the Jews.



Cybele



Izmir Tower

Like many other cities of Asia Minor, Smyrna suffered frequently, from earthquakes, but it always escaped entire destruction.

During the Middle Ages the city was the scene of many struggles, the most fierce of which was directed by Timur against the Christians. Tradition has it that Timur built a tower, using the heads of a thousand captives which he put to death.

Smyrna was the last of the Christian cities to hold out against the Mohammedans. In 1424 it fell into the hands of the Turks.

Rev 2:9 I know your afflictions and your poverty--yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.



Smyrna Shalom synagogue of Smyrna today.

Smyrna and Myrrh

Smyrna church was a persecuted church. The name Smyrna comes from the word myrrh, the sweet smelling incense. The aroma permeated the space when myrrh is crushed. It is used even today is incense. Smyrna church was sweet smelling sacrifice to God. Myrrh, is being bitter in taste which is expressive of the bitter afflictions, and persecutions, and deaths, the saints of Smyrna endured.

They were mercilessly put to death by fine Roman methods - lions, stakes, and torches. In this the Jews played a vital role. They reported the Christians to the Romans Romans were connoisseurs of torturing. To this tortured persecuted crushed church Jesus writes a comforting letter. He introduces himself:

Myrrh: Also called balm of Gilead.

Myrrh is a resinous substance that comes from the broken branches of a low shrub-like tree to be found in desert areas in the Middle East. The sap forms a

hard ocher-colored resin that was gathered and used in a number of products. The oil used for anointing the ark and the tabernacle when they were consecrated (Exod. 30.23-33) contained myrrh. It was used in the purification rites for women and, because of its fragrant pleasing odor, as a base in cosmetic oils and perfumes. The magi included myrrh among their gifts to Jesus.

Myrrh has a powerful narcotic effect and was combined with wine as a painkiller and soporific. At his crucifixion, Jesus refused a mixture of wine and myrrh. Later he drank vinegar, or a fermented acidic drink commonly used by laborers and soldiers to quench their thirst. Myrrh was also used to anoint corpses. The powerful aroma counteracted the stench of decomposition. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea used a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes when they wrapped the body of Jesus in a linen shroud (John 19.38-39). The women who went to the tomb probably included myrrh among the spices they brought as an expression of their love for Jesus.



Gum Myrrh Tree

(Commiphora myrrha – Indian Gulgulu)



"Myrrh trees grow on arid, rocky hills of the deserts of Arabia, Ethiopia, and Somalia. They are virtually non-destructible and can survive under the harsh conditions of the desert. The trees themselves grow to no more than 9 feet in height, but they are extremely sturdy. They have trifoliate leaves, although few at best, that are small and oval. Myrrh trees produce a fragrant, pale yellow to brown resin that seeps out of splits in the bark and hardens into reddish-brown globules called 'tears', about the size of a walnut. For thousands of years, these tears have been collected and placed over coals to produce a fragrant smoke. The surface of the gum is rough and powdered, the pieces brittle, semi-transparent, and oily. They have a granular fracture and sometimes show white marks. The odor is pleasant, but the taste is bitter and acrid."

http://altcancer.silvermedicine.org/myrrh_gum.htm

Rev 2:8 "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.

Jesus is implying here that through their martyrdom the church will live. Out of the sacrifice comes life as he himself have demonstrated.

Polycarp



Some think that the angel or pastor of this church at that time was Polycarp, the disciple of John. Irenaeus, who knew him, says he was appointed bishop of Smyrna by the apostles. Here he suffered martyrdom, and was buried: the large amphitheatre, in which he was put to death, is still to be seen, and his sepulcher is yet preserved in this place.

Esuebius talks about an epistle, sent by this church at Smyrna to the church at Pontus, giving an account of the martyrdom of Polycarp. According to the Apostolic Constitutions, the first bishops of Smyrna were Aristo Strataeas and Aristo the second, and Apelles, of whom mention is made in Rom 16:10; and who is reckoned among the seventy disciples. Then in succession was Polycarp.

Rom 16:10 Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household. There Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, was martyred, though without the sanction of the Roman government. It seems that the Jews of Smyrna were more antagonistic than were the Romans to the spread of Christianity, for it is said that even on Saturday, their sacred day, they brought wood for the fire in which Polycarp was burned. His grave is still shown in a cemetery there.

POLYCARP, martyred in A.D. 168, eighty-six years after his conversion, was bishop, and probably "the angel of the Church in Smyrna" meant here. The allusions to persecutions and faithfulness unto death accord with this view.

IGNATIUS [The Martyrdom of Ignatius 3], on his way to martyrdom in Rome,

wrote to POLYCARP, then (A.D. 108) bishop of Smyrna; if his bishopric commenced ten or twelve years earlier, the dates will harmonize.

TERTULLIAN [The Prescription against Heretics, 32], and IRENÆUS, who had talked with POLYCARP in youth, tells us that POLYCARP was consecrated bishop of Smyrna by St. John.

Polycarp, the venerable bishop of Smyrna, hearing that persons were seeking for him, escaped, but was discovered by a child. After feasting the guards who apprehended him, he desired an hour in prayer, which being allowed, he prayed with such fervency, that his guards repented that they had been instrumental in taking him. He was, however, carried before the proconsul, condemned, and burnt in the market place.

The proconsul then urged him, saying, "Swear, and I will release thee;--reproach Christ."

Polycarp answered, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, Who hath saved me?" At the stake to which he was only tied, but not nailed as usual, as he assured them he should stand immovable, the flames, on their kindling the fagots, encircled his body, like an arch, without touching him; and the executioner, on seeing this, was ordered to pierce him with a sword, when so great a quantity of blood flowed out as extinguished the fire. But his body, at the instigation of the enemies of the Gospel, especially Jews, was ordered to be consumed in the pile, and the request of his friends, who wished to give it Christian burial, rejected. They nevertheless collected his bones and as much of his remains as possible, and caused them to be decently interred.

Rev 2:10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days.

The period described here fits the period of martyrs of the persecution Period from AD 100 to AD 325. The ten days probably refers to the Ten Persecutions. (See Appendix).

Christians suffered financially and lived in poverty to begging. They suffered slander being accused of Cannibalism (eating the flesh of Christ and in communion drinking blood). But they were full overcomers, being faithful unto death. There is a beautiful story of Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna handed down to us in history. At the instigation of the Jews, he was brought out into the arena and was asked to renounce Jesus or be burned at stake. The old faithful replied, "86 years I have seen my Lord. Never once did he deny me. How can I deny Him for a few more wretched years in the world?" This was in AD 155. In this world we will have tribulations. But it will be shortened for his beloved.

Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Shall have tribulation ten days.

Short time Whether the "ten days" of persecution means a short time, or a definite period symbolized by "ten days" is uncertain.

Day= Year

A day is often a symbol of a year in Prophecy. Actually day in Aramaic is "Yom" which simply means a length of time.

Ten persecutions are named by church historians and two persecutions of ten years each. It might refer to one of the latter which should bear very heavily on that church. The Diocletian persecution continued ten years and three months.

The period described here fits the period of martyrs of the persecution Period from AD 100 to AD 325. The ten days probably refers to the ten Imperial Persecutions. Christians suffered financially and lived in poverty to begging. They suffered slander being accused of Cannibalism (eating the flesh of Christ and in communion drinking blood) But they were full overcomers, being faithful unto death. There is a beautiful story about Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, handed down to us in history. Read it in Fox's book of Martyrs..

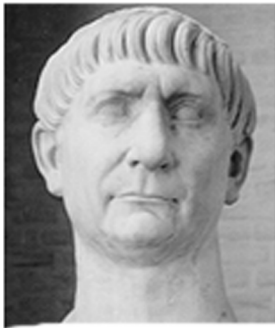
The Ten Primitive Persecutions



1. Nero (Roman emperor AD 54–68), persecution stirred up in AD 64. In this persecution the apostle Paul was killed and the apostle Peter crucified in Rome. This first persecution ceased under Vespasian (AD 69–79).



2. Domitian (Roman emperor AD 81–96). John, the apostle and evangelist was exiled to Patmos. After the death of Domitian, John was released and came to Ephesus in AD 97, where he wrote his Gospel and where he lived until the time of Trajan.



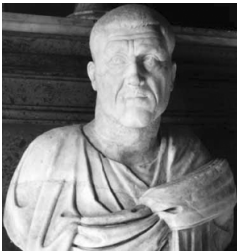
3. Trajan (Roman emperor AD 98–117). Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch suffered in this persecution.



4. Marcus Aurelius, his other name being **Antoninus Verus** (Roman emperor AD 161–180). Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, and the Christian martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, two cities in France, were martyred in this persecution.



5. Septimius Severus (Roman emperor AD 193–211). This persecution extended to northern Africa, which was a Roman province.



6. Maximinus, Gaius Julius Verus (Roman emperor AD 235–238).



7. Decius (Caius Messius Quintus Decius) Roman emperor AD 249–251). In this persecution was Fabian martyred; Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, forced into exile; and Origen imprisoned and tortured



8. Valerian (Roman emperor AD 253–260).



9. Aurelian (Roman emperor AD 270–275).



10. Diocletian (Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus, reigned AD 284–305) and **Maximian** (reigned AD 285–305) governed as emperors together. Diocletian began his furious persecution against the Christians in 303. The emperor ordered the doors of the Christian church at Nicomedia, the capital, to be barred, and then burnt the edifice with 600 Christians within. Many edicts were issued by him against Christians. Churches were demolished, Christian books were seized and burnt, Christians were persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and killed. The persecution brought a considerable number of martyrs, and it continued until 313.

UNTIL FINALLY



In 313 AD Emperor Constantine set Christians free and proclaimed religious freedom.

Church History of Eusebius of Caesarea. (AD 260–340)

The crown of life.

Not a royal crown but the garland crown of victory over death. In the early Olympics, the victors received a crown of wreath made of Olive branches. 2Ti 4:8. The Royal crowns are made of minerals and inanimate things. But this is live with life and beauty - even Solomon all his glory could not compare with these living beauty.



Jam 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

There are some who believe that it may not be referring to the Victor's Crown because of its gramatic structure. The same phrase occurs in Rev 2:10. It is the genitive of apposition, life itself being the crown as in 1Pe 5:4. This crown is "an honorable ornament" (Ropes), with possibly no reference to the victor's crown (garland of leaves) as in 1Cor 9:25 and 2Ti 4:8.

It appears to me that it probably signifies fulfilled abundant life – life as it should be – glory to glory, a life not dying.

Shall not be hurt of the second death.

Those who win the victory shall live forever. To die the second death is to be sent from the judgment throne into hell. See Rev 20:14.

Kether **כתר** appears also in the Jewish Mystic writings called Kabala.

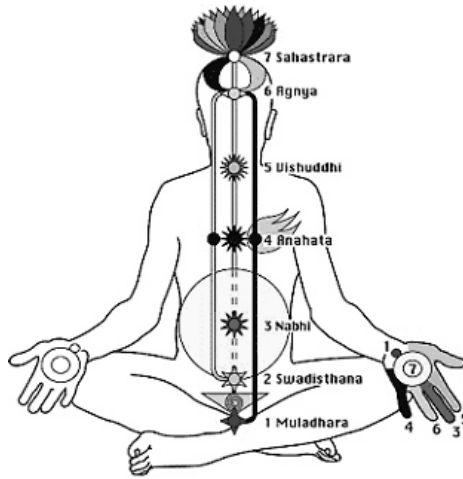
"The Kether is the first and topmost of the Sephiroth of the cabalistic Tree of Life. The term is a Hebrew word meaning "Crown." It represents the archetype of the number 1, the undifferentiated Godhead. It corresponds to the divine name

Eheieh, the archangel Metatron, the angelic choir called *Chayoth ha-Qadesh* (Holy Living Creatures) and the *Rashith ha-Gilgalim*, or Primum Mobile."
- David Godwin Godwin's Cabalistic Encyclopedia

"In Kether is the Divine White Brilliance, the scintillation and corruscation of the Divine Glory--that Light which lighteth the universe--that Light which surpasseth the glory of the Sun and beside which the light of mortals is but darkness, and concerning which it is not fitting that we should speak more fully. And the Sphere of its Operation is called *Rashith Ha-Gilgalim*--the beginning of whirling (or whirls, or whorls), the Primum Mobile or First Mover, which bestoweth the gift of life in all things and filleth the whole Universe. And *Eheieh* is the Name of the Divine Essence in Kether; and its Archangel is the Prince of Countenances--Metatron or Metraton, He who bringeth others before the face of God. And the Name of its Order of Angels is called *Chaioth ha-Qadesh*, the Holy Living Creatures, which are also called the Order of Seraphim." - Israel Regardie - The Golden Dawn

In the Jewish Kabbalah, Kether doesn't always represent the infinite in the absolute sense, it does represent the infinite within the framework of any given system. The framework represented here, is the cosmos or man. Kether - crown - represents the attainment of the total intention of Creation and Man. The successful realization of the Creator's plan is, attained when we receive the Crown. Kether is the ultimate perfection reachable by beings wherein they become the Sons of God or be like him – sharing the Crown of the Kingdom of Heaven in love and mercy. Kether unites all possibilities and is the seed of all possibilities. It is associated with the crown Chakra in the Indian tradition.

Chakra theory is probably a reinterpretation of the Jewish Kabala in Indian terms. It was developed after the arrival of St.Thomas in India by AD 52. Here the seventh Chakra is the Crown which when reached gives direct communication with the ultimate – God himself. Crown Chakra relates to consciousness as pure awareness. It is our connection to the greater world beyond, to a timeless, spaceless place of all-knowing. When developed, this Chakra brings us knowledge, wisdom, understanding, spiritual connection, and bliss.



Rev 2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

The reward for faithfulness unto death is the crown of life. It is not a diadem, the royal crown. It is in Greek Stephanos, the victor's crown, the crown given to athletes in Olympics which were made of olive leaves. The word reminds us of Stephanos, the first martyr of the Church described in Acts 7:59. Hill Pagus with its planned luxurious buildings were called "the Crown of Smyrna". Their coinage bore the inscription, "First in Asia in beauty and size". The promise is therefore an eternal life in the crown of heaven.

Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

A suffering church lives longer. It was one of the few cities that withstood Turkish invasion and the last to fall under Islam. Its survival helped to spur the Renaissance movement. Today Smyrna is a modern Turkish city called Izmir with a population over 500,000 people, half of which are still Christians. It is predominantly Orthodox with a tremendous revival sweeping through.

Second Death

The question "What is the Second Death?" has given rise to varying interpretations

depending on the varying theological stand points. Each claim the interpretation on scripture. I am giving below a summary of the view points.

1. Second Death is a second separation from God. Heaven and Hell are interpreted in terms of the presence of God. The first death occurred at the fall of Adam whereby Adamic race lost the rights of the Sonship - rights of the Children of God as they acted independently. These rights are regained to a few through the cross of Calvary through the Highway which is the body of Christ. This is culminated in the White throne judgment where a separation takes place. The second death occurs at the white throne when those who have rejected the Way are finally separated from God eternally with no further redemption. The first death is the death of the body and the second death is the death of the spirit. Those who attain the victor's crown receive the eternal life back with God while those who are rejected will have the spiritual death, an eternal separation in the body as well as the spirit.
2. There are some who believe that as the first death brought in the decay of the material body, the second death brings the decay of the spirit. This would imply total annihilation of the personality. It would mean the being cease to exist. It is not an eternal suffering in hell, but total extinction of the person where there will be no consciousness. Eternal Hell is totally alien to God's basic character of love. How can a God who is defined as "God is Love" put his Children into eternal hell and live happily ever after? In the total annihilation this conflict in the definition of God is removed. In fact there are no Greek term which can really be translated as eternal. The word used here really means ages after ages or for a very long periods.
3. The argument is further extended by some scholars leading to universal salvation. The fall of Adam ushered in end of the age of Innocence and God planned for the redemption of mankind and his reinstatement of Mankind back to his rightful position as Sons of God. As the fall brought in immense suffering to mankind because of the ego-centric behavior, God in his mercy and love to his children has blessed them with the first death – so that the suffering will not be eternal. This is accomplished by imposing the decay of the material realm and consequent separation of body and soul. Creation is thus subjected to decay with a hope of final redemption and reinstatement. Since God is not a dictator and every Son is given the Freedom of Will, this redemption cannot be accomplished in one state or one age. God accomplishes these through a sieving process over several ages. Life goes on and a second and third and fourth death with increasing pain and suffering will ensue to those who reject the way back. This teaching of St.Thomas in India is what led to the idea of

reincarnation. But this is not referring to reincarnation but to resurrection and continued judgment. Life continues and ultimately the long suffering of God the Father wins. The entire fallen beings will be redeemed and the creation itself will be redeemed from the curse of decay. This probably was the stand point of Paul as seen in Romans 8. This then validates the basic character of the Fatherhood of God and his Love. Then and then alone can the whole creation be released from the law of decay and death.

1Co 15:21-26 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Rom 8:19-23 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

THE CHURCH OF SMYRNA THROUGH CENTURIES

A bishop from Smyrna attended the council at Nicea.

In the 5c. Bishop Protherius, was present in the synod at Chalcedon.

Bishop Aethericus, assisted at three synods in this century, at Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon.

In the 6c there was a bishop of Smyrna in the fifth synod held at Rome and Constantinople: and even in the "eighth" century, one Antony, a monk, supplied the place of the bishop of Smyrna in the Nicene synod.

The Turks have in this place now thirteen mosques, the Jews two synagogues, and of the Christians there are two churches belonging to the Greeks, and one to the Armenians .



Old Smyrna fortifications



Old Smyrna spring house



Old Smyrna Temple of Athena



Smyrna acropolis cistern



Smyrna agora first level arches



Smyrna agora lion statue



Smyrna agora



Smyrna fortress Hellenistic foundation

Chapter Six

PERGAMOS

PERGAMON (Bergama)



Pergamum or Pergamos was once the capital of Asia before it was shifted to Ephesus. Pergamos was an ancient Greek city (an Arcadian colony) built around a hill north of river Kaikos, four kilometers away from the sea. Pergamos experienced high growth during the successors of Alexander the Great. King Lysimahos deposited his treasures there and assigned Fileretos to be their guardian. After the death of Lysimahos (283 BC), Fileretos became the autonomous ruler of the city. His brother Attalos founded the Kingdom of Pergamos. The Attalian Dynasty ruled the Kingdom for approximately 150 years and, during this era, Pergamos grew into a glorious and important city, alongside the then flourishing cities of Alexandria and Antiochia. It was an important trade, industrial, scientific and art center. Pergamos fell into the Roman hands in 133 BC. The Arabs conquered and looted the city in AD 716 and Tamerlane looted it in 1401. The city lost its splendor and fell into ruins. In 1675 there were no more than 20 Christian families. During the 1821 Hellenic Revolution in which this city took part devastated the city further.

Pergamon was a religious center with several temples. The main temple was that of Athena. Temple of Dionysos (Baccus, the god of wine) was constructed in the 2nd century B.C.



Baccus - the God of Wine

The Asklepion - the serpent city is the ancient medical complex, hospital just outside of the city and was in existence since the 4th century B.C. It contained theaters which can seat upto 3,500 people, There were also private rooms where the patients were cured by the sound of water and music. They had apparently used highly advanced natural therapy for both mental and physical ailments. It also had the temple of Asklepion and a vast library.



Asklepion Pergamum



Pergamum Library

The sanctuary of Athena was located on the top of the acropolis. It consisted of a temple and a sacred area. The monumental gate to the sanctuary is shown at the right. The inscription on it reads, "King Eumenes to Athena Bringer of Victory." The frieze in the

central part of the gateway shows shields and weapons taken as booty from the Pergamene victory over the Galatians, who were a neighboring people to the east



This statue of Athena stood in the north hall of the sanctuary. Athena was the patron goddess of Pergamum. Strong and chaste, she was considered the protector of the city. The renowned Pergamum library stood next to her sanctuary, showing her close connection with culture, wisdom, crafts, and learning of all sorts. The founding of the cult of Athena at Pergamum is included on the panels on the altar to Zeus, which also stood on the acropolis.

Rev 2:12 "To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.

Rev 2:13 I know where you live--where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city--where Satan lives.

Rev 2:14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.

Rev 2:15 Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Rev 2:16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Rev 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

Our Lord identifies himself to it as the one having "the sharp, doubled-edged sword." The Word of God coming from his lips is double-edged; it cuts two ways. It cuts down the enemies and it cuts the evil within the church. God is no respecter of persons. He cuts down evil and sin wherever it is seen. Both ways - within and without. This Church had enemies outside in the world and within the church was heresy and evil practices.

Jesus says that this is the location of the "throne of Satan." And it was. It was the capital of the Roman province of Asia, and was famed for its site on a 1000 foot hill which held its acropolis, dedicated to Zeus, Athena, Dionysus and Asclepius (around which centered a cult dedicated to medicine), and it also was the center of the Imperial cult, the worship of Augustus Caesar.

This was an intellectual city with a city library holding over 20,000 volumes, second only to the ancient library of Alexandria at that time. The word 'parchment' actually comes from the city's name Pergamos. Pliny says that it was invented in the second century BC in Pergamum; hence the term 'parchment' from the Latin pergamenta - 'of Pergamum'. Skin had been used as a writing material before in several other countries. But the refined methods of cleaning and stretching so that the parchment can be scribed on both sides of a leaf, leading eventually to the making of the manuscript rolls by the binding the leaves to form a book was new. Vellum is a parchment made from the delicate skins of young animals and the superior quality ones were made specially from unborn or still born baby animals.

Not far from the City was the center of worship of Zeus - the temple at Olympia in the state of Elis in Peloponnesus. In the center of the worship of the Acropolis in the city stood the Temple of Athena and on top of the mountain 800 feet above the plain led by a long flight of steps stood the imposing altar of Zeus over a 100 feet square land. It was another of world's Seven Wonders of the ancient world.. It was here that the Olympic games started. The temple of Zeus housed a colossal gold and ivory statue of Zeus, made by Pheidias of Athens in the fifth century BC. The statue was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Antiochus IV made a temple for Apollo at Daphne, near Antioch using the same pattern and dimensions. Pausanias provides a description of the statue of Zeus

and the temple area at Olympia. Pausanius says a woolen curtain, of eastern design, "adorned with Assyrian weaving and Phoenician purple", was dedicated to Zeus at Olympia by Antiochus IV. Some scholars believe that the curtain was taken from the temple in Jerusalem, when Antiochus plundered its treasures in BC 530. The columns were made of Pentelic marble, in the Corinthian style. This enormous structure, the largest temple in Greece, was finally completed by the Emperor Hadrian three centuries later, in the 2nd century AD. Its ruins can be still seen.



Pergamum was also the center for the worship of Serpent god Aesculapius - the god of medicine. Pergamum had the greatest physicians of that time. We still have the intertwined serpent symbol for medicine - though it is now being gradually replaced by the red cross symbol. Until a few decade ago the medical symbol was the intertwined serpent called Aschelpion.



Aesclepium

The god of healing, Aesclepius received worship in cultic centers around the Greek and Roman world. This large complex at Pergamum was originally constructed in the 4th century B.C. and became an official center in the 3rd c.

In the 2nd c. A.D., Hadrian further developed the center and it was added to the list of "wonders of the world."



Caduceus and the Cross as symbol of Medicine

Satan can heal - for a price.



Worship of the Aeshelpion (Pergamum Coin)



Healing Houses

Serapeum

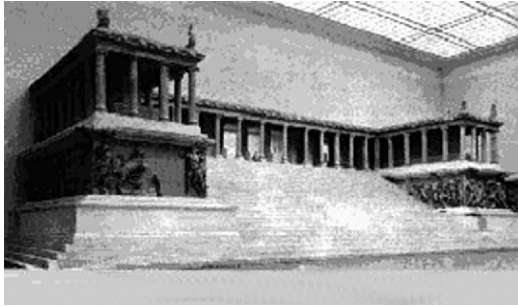
A temple to the ancient Egyptian god of the underworld was erected in the lower city of Pergamum. The Serapis cult was founded by Ptolemy I and was centered in Alexandria. Held to be a god of healing, particularly of blindness, Serapis was one of a number of Egyptian deities worshiped in ancient Greece and Rome.



The Seven Wonders of the World

The usual list consists of (1) the Pyramids; (2) the Hanging Gardens of Babylon; (3) the Statue of Zeus at Olympia; (4) the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus (5) the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus; (6) the Colossus of Rhodes; and (7) the Lighthouse at Alexandria. The Greek/Hellenistic ones (all but 1 & 2) date from the late 5th century BC through to the late 3rd BC, and three of these (4, 5, 6) are near to the coast of southern Turkey. Crudely, we might say that all these monuments are in the list because of their great size and enormous cost. Difficulty overcome is an additional criterion in the case of the Temple of Artemis (the swampy site) and the Colossus of Rhodes (its height), whilst artistic value singles out the Statue of Zeus at Olympia and the Mausoleum. Made with black marble house the Altar of the Serpent which is referred to in the letter as the Throne of Satan. This famous Altar of Zeus was constructed as a memorial of the victory against the Galatians. This Altar has the shape of a horseshoe and its dimensions are 36.44 x 34.20 m. It is composed of four parts and the high reliefs on it describe the war between the giants and the gods. The Altar which was taken away from Pergamon in 1871 and carried to Germany by the German engineer Carl Humann, is exhibited at the Museum of Pergamum in Berlin

On a coin of Septimus Severus, the altar at Pergamum is depicted, covered by a baldachin, or canopy, supported by four columns.



The Altar of Serpent in Pergamos - The Throne of Satan

For 100 years Satan's throne has been in East Berlin. If that has any connection with the rise of Hitler and the Nazis I leave to you to judge. But East Berlin is also where Hitler's headquarters were located. The Swedish paper "Svenska Dagbladet" reported on January 27, 1948 that after capturing Berlin, the Soviet Army removed the original Satanic altar to Moscow. However the altar did not appear in the museum for a long time. When the Architect Schusev, built Lenin's tomb, he took the Pergamos altar as the prototype for his structure. The archeologist Federic Paulson assisted him with details. This was in 1924.

Thou holdest fast my name

"Thou holdest fast my name", is another version which some people consider is given more in a tone of reproach than commendation. The word Pergamos means "much married". From the same root we get the words monogamy and bigamy, polygamy etc.. Just as an unfaithful wife continues to hold her husband's name, the churches were flirting with the world and other religions while professing to be Christians. However the interpretation seems to me as far fetched. Jesus is commending the great strength of faith at least some of the Christians showed in the midst of such Satanic cults.

The church here had a tough time. We do not know much about Antipas except by orthodox tradition. According to this tradition this saint lived during the reign of emperor Dometian in 83 AD He was contemporary with the Apostles. Antipas was consecrated bishop of Pergamos by the Apostle John. When he was old, he was caught by the idolaters of Pergamos. The demons, whom they worshipped, appeared to them and told them that they could neither live in that place nor accept their sacrifices because Antipas

was forcing them out. So, Antipas was brought to the governor, who tried to convince him that older things are much more honorable. Thus, the governor concluded that the religion of the Greeks was more honorable since it was older and grew with the passing of time. Antipas countered the argument using Cain's story as proof. Even though Cain was older in age than Abel, Abel was accepted by God and not Cain. When the governor and the Greeks heard this answer they burnt with anger and put the old Antipas in a red-hot brazen bull and roasted him alive. On April 11 the memory of holy hieromartyr Antipas, Bishop of Pergamos is still celebrated by the Orthodox Churches around the world. Antipas means "against all" and he stood against all odds for the faith that was once and for all handed down to him by the Apostles.

But the church in Pergamos was besetted by two problems:

1. The teaching of Baalam
2. Nicolaitanism.

The Teaching of Balaam

The Story of Balaam is explained in Numbers 22 to 25, but the doctrine of Balaam is clarified in Num. 31:15-16. Numbers 22-24 enumerates how Balak the King of Moab wanted Balaam, the Prophet to curse Israel. So he offered Balaam an extravagant reward. But the prophet even though tempted to his core remained true to his God Yahweh. He could not curse Israel. So he counseled the King Balak to make peace with Israel and invite them to join in their feasts and intermarry. This is indicated in Num 31:15-16 where God's anger was kindled when contrary to the divine instructions Israel left all the women alive after the conquest of Moab - the very thing God wanted destroyed. These women were asked to seduce the men of Israel by King Balaam with the strategy suggested by Balaam.

Num 24:25 Then Balaam got up and returned home and Balak went his own way.

Num 25:1 While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, :2 who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. 3 So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor. And the Lord's anger burned against them.

Num 31:14 Moses was angry with the officers of the army--the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds--who returned from the battle. 15 "Have you allowed all the women to live?" he asked them. 16 "They were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the LORD in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the Lord's people. 17 Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man, 18 but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man.

Yoke along with Baal was the doctrine of Balaam. It consists of:

eating the things sacrificed to the idols
to commit fornication.

Concerning the food offered to idols we have Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 8:1-9. The point here is when it becomes a compromise it becomes deadly. Getting involved into the feasts of the temple drags you away into the things of the evil. Not only that, you may become a dead witness, it may even become a trap.

Ritual fornication was a part of most pagan cults. So was it among the Cananites and the Moabites. It was also part of the worship of the Greek and Roman cults. Today it is the center of Satan Worship and is practiced widely among the business community for furthering good will among business magnets. For those gentiles who came from such background, these two became a great temptation among the Christian brotherhood of the period. This is why the verdict of the Synod of Jerusalem put down the following conditions. The counterpart we face in our day is the practice of pornography and fornication among Christians and the acceptance of living together without marriage, that is often widespread in the churches today. That is the error of Balaam.

= Abstain from pollution of idols
from fornication
from what is strangled
and from blood.

James spoke up: *Acts 15:20 Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.*

Fornication is the sex involvement of two persons in which at least one is married to a different partner. It is the symbol of unfaithfulness to life partners and is therefore the symbol of man's unfaithfulness to God. Thus fornication is a visible form of idol worship and has always been associated with it. The punishment for this social sin in the Old Testament was death by stoning. The punishment of body fornication is the realization of the existing separation of the life partner to eternal separation by killing the fornicator. In the same way the punishment for spiritual fornication is the realization of the separation to be eternal i.e. eternal separation from Christ.

In today's social context, living among an unchristian if not anti-Christian surroundings we live in the same condition as that of the Pergamos. Are we going along with the rest of the community tolerating what is evil and immoral?

Nicolaitans

Mystery shrouds the cult of Nicolaitans. Three possible explanations can be found.

1. These may be the followers of Nicolaus of Antioch who is said to have apostatized due to his false doctrine of Gnosticism and Antinomianism; or
2. These were a group who followed Balaam in teaching that it was permissible for God's people to engage in idolatry and immorality; or
3. It is a direct reference to the of the clerical system, or the development of a class of Priests within the church.

1. Nicolaus of Antioch.

Nicolaus of Antioch was one of the seven original deacons, appointed by the Apostles to serve at the tables. He was a Jewish proselyte (Acts 6:5). This Nicolas deviated from the doctrine mixing Gnosticism and Antinomianism with the Historic Christian doctrines. This story is told by Irenaeus , Tertullian, Hippolytus, Dorotheus of Tyre, Jerome, Augustine and Eusebius. They all say this was a sect of licentious antinomian Gnostics who lapsed into their antinomian license because of an over-strained asceticism. Hippolytus adds that Nicolaus was the forerunner of Hymenaeus and Philetus who was condemned in 2

Timothy 2:17. Eusebius adds that after the group was censured by John in the Apocalypse, the sect disappeared in a very short time.

What is Gnosticism? The Gnostics claims to have special direct revelation superior to the Apostles themselves. Secret teachings are given to them by God directly and through the Ascended Masters. Some of the Gnostics denied the true humanity of Christ. They taught that the title of Christ was simply a divine anointing that came out from God and rested upon the man, Jesus, at His baptism. As long as this Spirit was on this man Jesus , he was Christ. The anointing left Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, just before His crucifixion. Jesus was man, but Christ was God. There are various shades of Gnostics that we cannot really define the cult in one shade of color. The cult of the Serapis itself was a mix of Egyptian and Greek Gnosticism which promised heaven through various initiations and guidance under Ascended Masters.

Certain branches of Gnosticism teach that between God and creatures there are various grades of beings, some spiritual and others material. Since God being good cannot be the creator of evil, these secondary beings were the cause of the evil . So they postulated a series of emanations, aeons, spirits, angels etc. that came in between God and matter. Each generation is removed from central godhead by a distance and hence in its moral perfection. The furthest among them is the embodied beings. The body is inherently sinful, and hence the Gnostics practiced asceticism, self-torture and self-denial, in an effort to attain a higher spiritual state.

Another growth of this movement was Antinomianism. Antinomianism is the teaching that a person who is saved by grace and is under grace needs not practice self-control. The sons are free. The sons can do whatever they want because there is total freedom in Christ. A Christian may give full satisfaction to his bodily desires and appetites and passions without incurring any condemnation. It is these problems that were addressed by Paul in the Church of Collosia (col. 1:1-14) . All the errors which existed in the Apostolic Age are still with us today. Gnosticism has reappeared in Christian Science, Jehovah's witnesses and in the Unitarian church apart from Gnostic societies such a Theosophical Societym Agni Yoga Society, I AM Religious Activity of the Saint Germain Foundation, , Ascended Masters Teaching Foundation, Church Universal and Triumphant, and The Temple of The Presence.

2. Nicolaitans were a sect who encouraged Christians to engage in idolatry and immorality

It must have been a direct consequence of the loving caring church as a unity. So Nicolaitans introduced sex orgies as an expression of Christian love in their love feasts. Sex is hallowed by God as an expression of faithfulness and love and as an experience of Heaven and its joy as a result of intense personal unity. This is based on total commitment between a couple. Polyandry (One man- several wives) was allowed by God in the Old Testament period, 'because of their hard heartedness'. Polygamy (One woman - several husbands) fared better in other cultures. However they were far from ideal. Even in the ideal Hindu Tantric cult of sex as a realization of Godhead, total commitment to one partner is required. Later cults degenerated it to promiscuity as we have seen in Rajneesh and other cults. Nicolaitanism was the Rajneesh cult of Christianity and was a corruption of Truth. Corruption was always the trump card of Satan. The cult of the Children of God (They have been changing their names as a camouflage. What is their current name?) is the modern day version of Nicolaitanism. In every closely knit Christian fellowship, this danger still lurks. Many a mighty preachers have fallen under this temptation.

3. Nicolaitanism is the teaching of the Clerical Supremacy.

The Greek word nikos means victory or conqueror and laos means . people or laity. So we get the meaning "conqueror of the people." This is similar to the meaning of the Hebrew word "Balaam" which means "swallower of the people." The mystical interpretation of "the teaching of Balaam" in 2:14 is said to point to the "teaching of the Nicolaitans" in 2:15, providing support for this identification. John often uses Hebrew and Greek words to name the same object as in (Apollyon and Abaddon) Revelation 9:11. Hence this is a very plausible interpretation. Like fornication, priestcraft is also a corruption of a church arrangement. Bishops, elders and deacons were ordained in the early church to serve the people at the tables (because in the early church meals were served as a routine - every day) and to take care of the administrations. They were not considered spiritual authorities over people. In a sense teachers and evangelists, even though not ordained were the actual spiritual authorities. They were not ordained, but charismatic. The priesthood is a carryover from the Jewish temple cult. With the universal priesthood concept of the Christianity the separate human intermediary between man and God was for a time abandoned. However Apostles discovered that the running of an institution required

institutional authorities - who were to overlook the matters regarding administration and distribution. Hence the ordaining of Deacons as in Acts

Acts 6:2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

In all early churches, the administrative matters were handled by trustees from the laity even when there was an ordained priest for liturgical and spiritual purposes. However the Priests who formed a new class separated themselves from the laity and took authority over the laity (Nico- laity) The separation took in two steps.

1. In creating a separate Priestly Class. Among an unholy people priests were to be holy unto the Lord. This is why Israel had a tribe so separated. But this is no more true for Christians. See peter 2:1-10 and Heb. 10:19-25. As Christianity entered to Greek and Roman culture, the Christian priests adopted the dress of the Jewish Priests. In so doing the laity got out of touch with the word of God and relegated everything from the study of the word, preaching, witnessing, and even praying to the Priest who were paid for that purpose.

2. In converting the worship into a ritual mystery over which laity had no control left out the laity in the assembly hall as passive participants which simple responses. It was to the advantage of the Priests to introduce as much rituals and mystery and unintelligibility to the worship as possible. This introduced the mystic and Gnostic elements into the church. As a result ordinary men and women in the church became ignorant and considered the teachings of Christians as a mystery and beyond his understanding. Again Gnostic tendencies have crept in here.

It is probably to this move that Jesus is referring to. As history has shown, this development eventually led the church into a dark period. Only the word of God could revive the church through reformation in the 18th century. We could still see the two forces within the churches. This is more true within the Catholic church and the Pentecostal Churches. Lay movements and Charismatic movements are looked upon with suspicion. Even in the independent churches, personality cults create the same problem.

Counterfeit revivals of today are an example of this. Though they do not wear separate dresses and calls themselves Brothers, the cult grows around their authority and revelation peculiar to them and not on the basis of the word of God. Strangely enough these personal revelations - which are often contrary to the word of God- are given a status equal to the scriptures.

The rewards promised in verse 17 follows the concept of fidelity to Jesus as husband.

I will give you the hidden manna. Manna was the food that sustained Israel through their wilderness travel. Jesus promises enough strength to stand against the foes of the Satanic City.

I will give you a white stone with a personal name. As the husband and wife have their own secret personal names for each other, Jesus promises a close relation with those who overcome.

White stones were used in those days

1. As a token of acquittal from the court. There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
2. As a token for ration which provides food and provision for families.
3. As a lucky charm to keep them form the evil ones.

White Stone



This white stone at Pergamum with names inscribed is a modern memorial.

Dispensationally this refers to a period known as the State Church Period (AD 325 to 590) when Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity as the official religion of the State. The reasons for such a move was both political and religious. By the time of the ascension of Constantine, the Christians had conquered the palace and the royal family working underground. His predecessor Emperor Diocletian ordered severe purge of the entire civil service, and the palace service only to discover that his own wife and children were Christians. In order to maintain the unity of the Empire according to the then existing ideas of "one nation - one religion - one god", the official religion was changed to Christianity. In order to become a religion of the state, Christianity itself had to undergo drastic dressing up by absorbing Roman techniques, symbols, ceremonies and practices. Priestcraft, mystery symbols, ceremonies associated with worship and separation common people and clergy, daily sacrifices, penance, hierarchy of gods and saints and even idol worship has to come into it so that every one could accept it. A socially acceptable religion for every one was so generated. We could see the same trend in modern New Age movements. We could see the same trend in christian churches today. Are we willing to forgo the basic tenants of Christianity and the centrality of Jesus because it may not be acceptable to the other religions. These are actually the continuation of the Gnostic traditions on which Jesus pronounces his intolerance. Jesus described this in his Kingdom Parables of Mathew 13 in the parable of the Mustard Tree. Mustard is an herb and can never become a tree, but it did. It grew so big and brought forth branches and "the birds of the air" found shelter in it. We have here the magnificent State Church of the early period.

But forget the tree and the birds and the paraphernalia. Jesus calls you to be his special bride. He promises a relationship so personal that for those who overcome these external barriers he gives his gifts - manna and the white stone and a personal name which no one else knows.



Chapter Seven

THYATIRA Rev. 2:18-29

Thyatira was located in a Asia Minor (modern Turkey). It was situated in a fertile valley through which trade routes passed. Although damaged by an earthquake during the reign of Augustus (27 B.C.-A.D. 14), Thyatira was rebuilt with Roman help. Its modern name is Akhisar.

Rev 2:18 "To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

Rev 2:19 I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

Rev 2:20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.

Rev 2:21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling.

Rev 2:22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.

Rev 2:23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

Rev 2:24 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you):

Rev 2:25 Only hold on to what you have until I come.

Rev 2:26 To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations--

Rev 2:27 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' -- just as I have received authority from my Father.

Rev 2:28 I will also give him the morning star.

Rev 2:29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The ancient city of Thyatira is located approximately 80 Kms to the north-east of Smyrna (Izmir) and is known today as Akhisar. Of the ancient city only the temple of Apollo, an ancient church and a collonaded road remain. The city was founded by Lydians when it was called Pelopio. Years later Selucus Nicator, one of the generals of Alexander the Great, conquered the city during the 3rd century BC. It was Selucus who changed the name to Thyatira. By 100 BC the city came under the influence of the Romans and majority of the people were Jewish settlers. It was situated at the junction of two valleys and therefore was an important traffic controlling station. There was a Roman garrison stationed there for this purpose. A market developed around this and became famous for purple cloth and pottery. As an important and strategically placed trade route junction, the two trades - the purple cloth and pottery - flourished there. The Thyatiraian purple cloth was known all over the world and was used by Emperors, Kings and Chiefs as their royal dress. They were made out of a dye taken from a sea animal and was considered a trade secret of Thyatirian community of traders. Trade guilds in such a situation was part of a pagan cult. This was necessary to ensure unity of the separate guilds as a family. They met for worship, discussed trade matters and it was then followed with a business dinner.

These dinners were appended by ritual orgies. These orgies included ritual fornication believed to effect better understanding between the members of the guild. It also ensured that the absolute mystery and the trade secrets be contained within the members of the guild.



The principal deity of Thyatira was Apollo Tyrimnaeus. The titles given to the deity associate him with the power of the sun. In the picture shown here, the god stands on the right, shaking hands with the emperor. The god holds a battle ax to show his power in war





Thyatira was a center of trade. Textiles were among Thyatira's most important products. One of the town's cloth merchants was a woman named Lydia, who conducted business as far away as Philippi (Acts 16:14). The coins from Thyatira shown above convey a sense of prosperity. The image on the left emphasizes fruitfulness. Images weave together images of serpents.



Thyatira Bronze-smith



In Acts 16:14 we hear about Lydia the purple cloth seller from Thyatira.

Acts 16:12 From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. 13 On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. 14 One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. 15 When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home.

Lydia is mentioned as a worshiper of God amidst a pagan world. God used her as the nucleus of a Church in Thyatira. Her home was the first church in Thyatira. In this city there was a church. The church grew. But they had pressure from their guilds. Not to join a guild was simply committing business suicide. You will be probably thrown out of business. Under such pressures church members were forced to take part in these guild meetings. All concerned knew the spiritual implications of these, but either justified it, theologized it or plain disregarded it. They simply compensated it by generous contributions and donations to religious matters so that God will wink His eye in some other direction.

Jesus introduces himself as "... the Son of God ..." (2:18). The Son of Man who speaks to them is the Son of God. They are reminded of the deity of their Lord, and their own new relationship as adopted sons of God. Their new relationship as sons brought with them new responsibilities and changes in behavior. So Jesus points out his eyes like burning fire which can see through outer coverings. He burns out the facade and sees our nakedness. There is nothing hidden from him. Sure enough they had their justifications as social pressure. Tertullian one of the Ante-Nicene fathers preached against such pitfalls. A Christian will have to face the world. He has to live in this world which is not conducive to Holy living. The problem today is just the same as it was then. But the Christian answer is "not to conform, but to transform" The Son has feet like burnished bronze. The feet, portraying movement and moral stand, are strong, sure and beautiful (Rom. 10:15). The Son's feet are consistent with the Son's eyes. The feet move in accordance to the eyes' discernment. The Thyatirans, as adopted sons of God (Gal. 3:26; 4:1 ff.), stand firm in their new found position as sons of God. They should move as sons of god, firmly and decisively in the right direction. Holy relationship ("Son of God") should result in holy actions.

Jesus accepts the work, the love, the faith, their ministry and patience (v.19) They were very commendable. But there was this - Jezebel (v.20) Apparently in the church there was a very important and influential lady who called herself as a prophetess who encouraged the church members to go along with the social culture. She justified the practice of fornication, idol worship and eating of meat sacrificed to the idols (v.21) Sexual involvement is a form of worship in all heathen religions. In most sophisticated religions they appear in a more sublimated form either as fertility worship (as in Siva Linga) or as mother worship (as in Mariolatry). Priestesses (Deva Dasees) of temple were ritual prostitutes. They were the unifying force in the community. They provided universal love. Most people who became Christians in Thyatira still held this appealing aspect. In Christianity also sex is a worship as an image of relation between Jesus and his Church with absolute fidelity between one man and one woman. It is a foretaste of Heaven on earth. It is therefore tempting to theologize and say it provides love to all. When some inspired prophetess encourages and delivers it as a means of God-realization, it is not surprising that most people went along.

The prophetess teaches and seduces.

Most people think that this lady - called here as Jezebel - was the wife of the elder in Thyatira. So she not only taught but actively seduced the church members into it. To make church as the guild will be a solution. Won't it? It is, but then it behaves differently.

Historically Jezebel was the Queen of King Ahab. In the time of Elijah, Israel knew Jezebel as the Sidonian idol-worshipper married to the wicked king Ahab. Functioning like a prophetess, she had taught idolatry to Israel while murdering the prophets of God and inspiring her husband to evil. She was the greatest of all Baal worshippers. Her story can be found in 1 Kings 16:31 - 33 and in detail in chapters 18-21 and in 2 Kings 9. The entire Israel (except 400 men of faith) followed her evil ways. The punishment of God for that was severe. All those who professed Baal were killed within the temple of Baal and Jezebel herself was thrown down and eaten by her own wild dogs. A similar punishment is pronounced in Rev. 2:22-23. We do not have any historical documents to the execution of the verdict of Jesus. But we should not be surprised if an disease similar to the AIDS or venereal diseases to have took up the order. It is a natural consequence of sin that it breeds death. For the wages of sin is death.

The name Jezebel as given in Old Testament means "where you reside". The implication here is to the doctrine of friendship with the world which is the strongest weapon of Satan to corrupt the church. A little variation of love, of sex of joy, of pleasure; a misplaced emphasis, that is all what is required to give a totally variant heresy. The historic Jezebel was doing the same thing. As Baal worship was part of the agricultural form of living in Canaan, so was the Thyrian Prophetess teaching in a community of feudal guilds. In our times, the community is different. We are essentially a capitalistic society centered in selfishness where values are measured in terms of money. To be successful in business requires other forms of tolerance and compromises. What are they in your church, in your community? Are there practices that are immoral, which are contradictory to holy living? Do we condone them on the basis of social necessity? Do we claim the freedom in Christ to cover them up?

"the deep things of Satan"

In this church Nicolaitanism is not mentioned by name. But evidently the theme is the same. It has become so ingrained in the church that it is no more referred to by that heretic name. Instead it is called the "deep things", the great mystery unfathomable by reasoning, that can only be experienced. - "the deep things of Satan" under the leadership of a prophetess.

Dispensationally this church period refers to the Church Age or Papacy Period starting from around AD 350 and lasted for over 1200 years. Incidentally Jesus writes this longest letter to this church indicating its length. It was painted by Our Lord in the Parable of the Leaven in Matthew 13:33.

The woman here refers to Jezebel who hides the leaven in the divine church (three measures of meal) until all of was leavened. The history of the period is truly a replica of the rule of Ahab and Jezebel filled with corruption of doctrines, introduction of pagan rites and rituals, idol worship and particularly Madona worship. There were feuds and wars within the church over power and authority.

Under these difficult times Jesus demand only a light burden from those who 'have not the teaching', viz. "Hold fast to that which you have." Till he comes with power and glory.

To the overcomers he promises authority over the nations.

rule them with an iron scepter

Verse 27 refers to the quality control supervisors of the pottery guild, who sounded each pot for quality. He will gently strike the pot to generate a vibration. If the vibrations did not produce a high pitched note showing that the construction was perfect, it was shattered to pieces with a shattering blow. An iron rod was used for this purpose. The picture of the authority over the nations is a total authority to destroy that which are found unworthy. The authority is over the nations, which evidently is on the earth. This therefore would simply imply the dictatorial rule of Jesus during the millennial period when these overcomers are given authority.

morning star

The verse 28 is probably the most difficult verse for interpreters. The word " morning star" occurs only five times in the bible and that is in the books of revelations, Isaiah, Job and Peter.

(Isa 14:12 NIV) How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!

This is assumed to be referring to the fall of the Archangel who became the Satan. This archangel evidently was a morning star from where he was thrown down to earth. He was ruling the nations of the earth.

(2 Pet 1:19 NIV) And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Here Peter is referring to the written word of God as guide until the ultimate realization of Jesus in our hearts occurs. This looks forward to the time when we will be like Jesus. Evidently morning star here refers to Jesus

(Rev 22:16 NIV) "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

This verse clearly identifies Jesus as the bright Morning Star. Notice the adjective bright added.

(Job 3:9 NIV) May its morning stars become dark; may it wait for daylight in vain and not see the first rays of dawn,

(Job 38:7 NIV) while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

Taking the evidence of these two verses we have to guess a hierarchy of creatures at the time of the creation of earth as the Morning Stars and the Sons of God. We have no clear description of these creatures. But evidently among the Morning Stars Jesus has the preeminence as the Bright Morning Star.

Why is Jesus referred to as the Bright Morning Star. We need to look into the meaning of the word which literally means "that which is strewn at the dawn or the beginning." Thus Jesus being the creator - which John boldly proclaimed

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. :2 He was with God in the beginning. :3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Jesus therefore is the Bright Morning Star who created all Morning Star. Just as he identified with mankind to be the First Born of New Creation Man, he also identified himself to be the First Born of all creations - in this case with the Morning Stars. As he is the Son of Man so he is also the Bright Morning Star. So also he is the Son of God among the Sons of God. We see the beautiful picture of a God who identifies himself with his creatures though he is the creator of all things. Not only that Yhvh is transcend, but he is also immanent in his own creation.

What is the Morning Star?

"Morning Star" is a name often used to describe the planet Venus. For part of each year Venus rises in the eastern sky, just before the sun. Since it is a very bright planet and at that time remains visible into the morning hours, it might be called a *morning* star even though it isn't really a star at all. During other parts of the year, Venus becomes an *evening* star. Then it sets in the west, after the sun. Whether visible in the morning or

evening, Venus never moves very far from the sun because it is an inner planet. Mercury also qualifies as a morning and evening light, but it is more difficult to see. "In Scripture the title *morning star* is used in three different ways. First, Job 38:7 describes angels as morning stars (or day stars) that sang together at the creation of the universe. Angels were part of the initial creation (Col 1:16) and thus became witnesses of the great event. Second, the king of Babylon is described as a morning star and also a fallen star (Isa 14:4,12). The evil leader fell from the highest position to the lowest, just as Satan did. Third, the Lord Jesus is described as 'the bright Morning Star' (Rev 22:16), which rises in our hearts (2 Peter 1:19). Early-morning stargazers often watch the eastern sky to see the brilliant planet Venus rise to signal a new day. As Christians--children of God--we are told to shine 'like stars in the universe' (Phil 2:15)."

(Astronomy and the Bible, Donald B. DeYoung)

Thus

(Rev 2:28 NIV) I will also give him the morning star, - is a promise of inheritance in the new creation. Does it mean they will be placed in a morning star? Not only they will reign with Jesus through the millennium, but they will be amply rewarded.

When Christ promises that he will give the "morning star" to his faithful ones, he "promises that he will give himself to them, that he will impart to them his own glory and a share in his own divinity

Dispensationally this message is for the Church State Period, when Papacy was in its zenith. This period is often referred to in History as the Dark Ages. Jesus promises them a Morning Star which evidently came upon the church with the opening up of the Word of God and the renewal of the Holy Spirit during the Reformation period which followed.

Under these tense situations Jesus demands them to hold fast to what little they have. A fuller freedom and breakthrough of the Holy spirit is promised to History leading to Renaissance and Reformation.

Chapter Eight

SARDIS **Rev. 3:1-6**

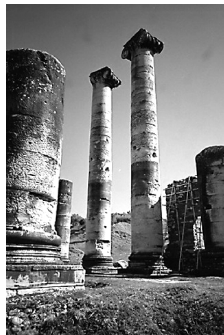
Located on the banks of the Pactolus River, Sardis was 60 miles inland from Ephesus and Smyrna. Sardis lies in the territory of ancient Lydia, at the foot of the Tumulus Mountains and overlooking the Hermus River plain, where evidence has been found of human activity as early as the Palaeolithic period (ca. 50,000 B.C.). Recent excavations have focused on the Archaic era, particularly the 7th and 6th centuries B.C., when Sardis was the capital of the Lydian empire and at the height of its power, and on the Late Roman era, when the city was still flourishing.

Archaeological highlights of Archaic date include the royal burial mounds at Bin Tepe, city wall, and gold-working installation on Pactalus River; important monuments of Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine date include the temple of Artemis, bath-gymnasium complex, synagogue, and row of shops adjoining the synagogue. Over 11,000 objects have been inventoried by the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis since its founding in 1958; a selection of the more important finds are on display in the Archaeological Museum of Manisa.

By the late second millennium B.C., a modest community existed at the foot of the acropolis. According to the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, the "sons of Herakles" founded a dynasty that remained in power for "505 years, son succeeding father from generation to generation till the time of Candaules" (from ca. 1185 to ca. 680 B.C.). By the early 7th century B.C., Sardis was the capital of a growing empire, with a distinct archaeological record.

During the Mermnad dynasty (ca. 680-547 B.C.), the empire reached its greatest geographical extent, stretching from the Aegean Sea to central Anatolia. Herodotus credits the Lydian kings with the invention of coinage (ca. 6th c BC.) and the construction of the great royal burial mounds at Bin Tepe, some 6 miles to the northwest of the acropolis. Kings Gyges and Croesus were particularly renowned for lavish gifts dedicated in Greek sanctuaries. In 547 B.C., Sardis was sacked by Cyrus the Great and remained under Persian control until 334 B.C., when it was captured by Alexander the Great. The city continued to flourish during Hellenistic and Roman times, when ambitious construction projects were initiated, including the temple of Artemis and bath-gymnasium complex. A section of the bath - gymnasium complex was later remodeled to accommodate a synagogue. This synagogue, now partially restored by the Harvard-Cornell Expedition, is the largest early synagogue yet excavated in the Mediterranean world.

During the early Christian period Sardis became one of the Seven Churches which were mentioned by St. John in The Book of Revelation. Sardis was one of the legendary cities of Asia Minor in what is today Turkey. In the seventh century B.C., Sardis was the capital of the kingdom of Lydia. Gold was found in the river near Sardis and the kings who lived there were renowned for their wealth. The Persians captured Sardis in the sixth century and made it the administrative center for the western part of their empire. The fabled "royal road" connected Sardis with the Persian cities to the east. In New Testament times, Sardis was part of the Roman province of Asia.





The goddess Artemis was the principal deity worshiped at Sardis, as well as at Ephesus and other cities. Artemis and her brother Apollo were said to be the children of Zeus and Leto. In legends, Artemis is often pictured as a pure and virgin huntress, fearless in opposing her adversaries. As the goddess of the city, she may have been perceived more in her role as a mother goddess, a provider of fertility and overseer of childbirth.



The Acropolis

The city was home to the famous bishop Melito in the 2nd century.



Temple of Artemis

Artemis was the main goddess of the city and the temple dedicated to her in Sardis was one of the seven largest Greek temples (more than double the size of the Parthenon).

Artemis, known as Diana by the Romans, was the daughter of Zeus and twin of Apollo. She was the goddess of the hunt, the moon and fertility.



Gymnasium-Bathhouse

A large complex built in center of the lower city in the 2nd century A.D. included a gymnasium and a bathhouse.

The complex was over five acres in size and its western part was characterized by large vaulted halls for bathing. The eastern part was a palaestra, a large open courtyard for exercise.



Synagogue

The synagogue of Sardis is notable for its size and location. In size it is one of the largest ancient synagogues excavated. In location it is found in the center of the urban center, instead of on the periphery as synagogues typically were. This attests to the strength and wealth of the Jewish community in the city. This synagogue came into use in the 3rd c. A.D.

Rev 3:1 "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

Rev 3:2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.

Rev 3:3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

Rev 3:4 Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.

Rev 3:5 He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.

Rev 3:6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Sardis was a city 30 miles from Thyatira situated on the mountain cliff of Timolus. It was built in BC 500 and was probably one of the first affluent cities of the world. It was impregnable because of its position, self sufficient with respect to food and water and other resources. It was approachable only from one side by a single road. Like Jerusalem, Sardis could have boasted that with only the lame and the infirm could defend the city.

2 Sam 5:6 The Jebusites said to David, "You will not get in here; even the blind and the lame can ward you off." They thought, "David cannot get in here." :7 Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David

Nevertheless the city was taken twice once in BC 449 and then in BC 218. In both cases the procedure was the same. In both cases the helmet of one of the soldiers fell down the cliff side. As he took his path down to extricate it, the enemies watched. In the night they traced the footholds in single file and entered the city. The sentries were surprised by the attack and the city fell without a fight. They were confident and therefore careless.

Rev 3:2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die,

It was rich. Therefore an affluent society living in absolute luxury lived there. Being business people, it was here the first minted coins were used in trade. The mountain area was an earthquake zone. When it was destroyed by an earthquake it was rebuilt within eighteen months in more (then) modern design and architecture, much more sophisticated and planned without any external aid. Such was the wealth of the people.

In this city was a church following the labors of John. They had beautiful cathedrals and rich treasures. The churches were always full and they were always doing things for God. They had wonderful expensive projects which probably included uplifting of the poor and the needy - orphanages and rehabilitation centers and what not.

I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

They had a form of godliness, not the power. They worshipped God, but the spirit was missing.

Mat 15:8 "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 9 They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men."

They professed to be Christians but lacked Christ. The nature of the society invariably was reflected in the church. Where there is no want, you may fail to rely on God in your daily life. This is why the Israel was given one day's bread a day and not more. An affluent church is seldom called in for affirmation. They had it easy and they were careless. Therefore the fall was inevitable.

Dispensationally this reverts to the Reformation Churches. As soon as the great waves of reformation were over, the church found itself in cozy situation and the spirit was lost. They did a lot of reorganization, rectification and renaming but went no further.

for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.

Like the city of Sardis, the church became careless and fell victims to the enemies due to sheer carelessness. The rise of Higher Criticism in 1800s assisted by the rationalistic movements of the period and the Newtonian Mechanistic view of law based universe led to the collapse of faith. Kant, Hegel, Kirkegaard, Marx, Freud and Lenin were only the outgrowth of this social situation. In the face of these strong rationalistic and critical outbursts church shrank back to emphasize social reforms and outward work to the utter neglect of essential gospel of Jesus. The word "Sardis" means "escaping" or "that which remains".

There was no justification for the Sardis Church for their lack of witnessing because they heard and received the full revelation. Reformation was complete. They had the full Word

of God in everyone's hand. Jesus refers to this church age in the parable of the hidden treasure. Through the mighty power of the Holy Spirit the church was given the full hidden treasures of salvation full and free. They have received it with joy. So Jesus asks them

Rev 3:3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.

To those lost their faith he has only one advise - repent.

The normal result of watching the church is that the enemy will fall upon them when they are least expected. That is what happened to the church in the reformation period. But Jesus says:

But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

The same idea of watching is explained in the parable:

Mark 13:32 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. :33 Be on guard! Be alert ! You do not know when that time will come. 34 It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. 35 "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back--whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. 36 If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. 37 What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"

Fortunately there were people who kept the fire going even in these situations. One specialty of Sardis was its white fur coats - the symbol of aristocracy. Jesus refers to this symbol of wealth and glory in verse 4

Rev 3:4 Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.

White evidently represents purity and undefilement.

The book of life referred to earlier in the bible in Philippians 4:3.

Phil 4:3 Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

However it is implied even in the Old Testament when Moses speak to God on behalf of his fallen people.

Exo 32:32 But now, please forgive their sin--but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written." :33 The LORD replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book.

In this passage God clearly defines the conditions under which He will blot the name out of the book of Life. More detailed reference to the Book of Life is made in various places in the book of Revelations at the time of White Throne Judgment. It is often referred to as "the lamb's book of life". The implication is thus that it contains the names of those who have attained the citizenship of the Kingdom of God. As in Rome of John's period, these citizens were not liable to normal code of procedures as applicable to non-Roman citizens. (This is in contrast to the Law of the United States where the code of procedures in case of crime is the same). The people whose names are written in the book of Life do not stand in judgment before the white throne.

Rom 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Whatever be their other basic qualifications for the citizenship to the Kingdom, for those in Sardis, the fact that they kept themselves from the Jezebelian fornication was sufficient. They shall walk with Christ - in the stola, the white robes of justification, and adoption, and comfort, or in the white robes of honor and glory in the other world. .Jesus promises them that He will acknowledge them before the Father as a member of the Church - as his bride.

Chapter Nine

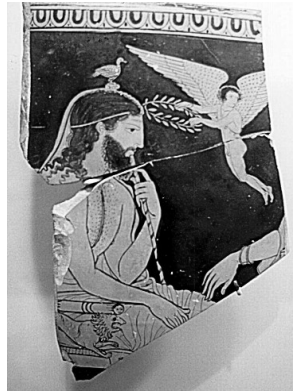
PHILADELPHIA Rev. 3 : 7 – 13



Philadelphia lies in a valley at the foot of a mountainous plateau in west central Turkey. The low dark hill in the center of the picture shows the area of the ancient city. The kings of Pergamum founded Philadelphia as an outpost of their realm in the second century B.C. The town was located along an important travel route that linked Pergamum in the north with Laodicea to the south. In New Testament times, Philadelphia was part of the Roman province of Asia. The town was devastated by an earthquake in A.D. 17, and for a

time people lived in fear of aftershocks. Philadelphia was rebuilt with help from the emperor Tiberius.

Like other towns in the region, Philadelphia prospered through agriculture and related industries. The soil in the valley was suited to growing vines, making wine production an important. The flocks that grazed in the area supplied wool and hides for textiles and leather production



An inscription from Philadelphia mentions a number of gods and goddesses. **Zeus**, the chief god, was said to have commanded people to be pure and to refrain from deceit, murder, theft, adultery, and other types of evil. There was an altar to **Hestia**, the goddess of hearth and home. The inscription also mentions the savior gods, including **Good Fortune**, **Virtue**, **Health**, and other deities.

Rev 3:7 "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

Rev 3:8 I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

Rev 3:9 I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars--I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

Rev 3:10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

Rev 3:11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

Rev 3:12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.

Rev 3:13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Philadelphia means "Brotherly Love". This city was built by Attilus who built it in memory of his brother. It was the gateway to the Exotic East as far as the West was concerned. Attilus built it to spread his religion to all the world. Thus Philadelphia was built as a missionary city for the Pagan religion. Its major exports were Wine and the religion of the wine god Dionysius. We could write under major exports column: Spirit and spirit. Down the main streets of the city were a series of pillars with the names of eminent citizens along with the name of Emperor who honored them. It was common practice for the city as a form of citation for the citizens who contributed to the society. It is this practice that is referred to in verse 11. The city itself was in the volcanic zone and always under constant threat of destruction. Its soil was black soil, which was ideal for growing grapes - a contribution of the volcanic mountains. Incessantly the walls of the houses are cracked, different parts of the city being thus affected at different times. For this reason few people live in the city, and most of them spend their lives as farmers in the country. The city was very wealthy and excavations indicates that the houses in the city had running hot and cold water. The hot water was piped from hot water springs which abounded in the volcanic mountain area. It is believed that Christians came in this area in a humanitarian mission to help the victims of volcanic destruction and won the city. Recent excavations have uncovered a small Byzantine church, an acropolis, a synagogue and long stretches of Royal Road with large columns on either side. Famous residents of the area include King Midas and Aesop.

who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

The Key of David

The Key of David mentioned here is a direct reference to Isaiah's prophecy:

Isa 22:20 "In that day I will summon my servant, Eliakim son of Hilkiah. 21 I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. 22 I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open."

That is a reference to an incident recorded in the 22nd chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah. In the days of Hezekiah the king there was a courtier whose name was Shebna. He had been caught in a personal scam and as a result God says "I will take him and whirl him around and around, and hurl him into a far country." It was a prediction that he would be sent into Babylon. He would be replaced by a man named Eliakim, of whom God said, "I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David. What he opens, no one can shut, and what he shuts, no one can open." Eliakim was one of Jesus' ancestors. Eliakim is otherwise not referred to in any other historical context. Evidently this refers to Jesus' role in the salvation. Jesus is the door. As the Son of David he holds the keys for mankind.

This key is Philadelphia - Brotherly love. It led Jesus to the Cross. "There is no greater love than this - that a man lays down his life for his brethren." What then is this Key. It can be none other than the blood of Calvary. There is no other way. There is no other door.

Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

John 10:7 Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep."

John 10:9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.

In contrast to this we have the statement in revelation:

Never again will he leave it.

This has been interpreted by reincarnationalists as a proof of reincarnation. In a sense all Christians believe in reincarnation. At the second coming of Jesus all men will be "reincarnated" or resurrected to enter into fellowship with God or to be away from God. It is this privilege of being with Jesus eternally is referred to here by never leaving it. Those who lived unrighteously, and those who willfully rejected the offer of salvation through Jesus, who refused to walk through the door into the new life, will they ever have another opportunity to salvation? Bible never deals with that problem and we will never be able to answer that problem. The reason is simply that the Bible is written for mankind in history. It does not even describe heaven. It only indicates in terms of impossible human terms. It does not describe hell. It only indicates in terms of impossible human terms. Bible consistently refused to describe anything beyond human history. It is simply beyond the scope of revelation and beyond the scope of human understanding. And I believe that was intentional.

It refers back into the condition of Philadelphia city where people lived mostly outside the city for fear of earthquakes. Now Jesus says they will never leave the city for fear. This city is founded on solid ground and cannot be shaken. This is the ultimate refuge.

Jesus says that he 'shuts and no one opens'. The door to salvation is now open. This is the Key of David that has opened this doorway. But it will be soon shut. Dispensationally at the close of this Church age, the door will be shut and no one will be able to enter in through the door of grace. Period of Grace is going to be shut.

Mat 25:10 "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' 12 "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' 13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Jesus will come for his bride - the waiting church and then the door will be shut.

This reference to the closing of the door is one strong argument for the pretribulation rapture of the church which will take place at the close of the Philadelphia Church Age. This is supported strongly by the verses that follows it.

Rev 3:9 I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars--I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

The excavations I have mentioned earlier indicates a synagogue and a church in close proximity. Christians were considered as a cult and heresy within the Jewish religion. Jews had a special status within the Roman Empire where they were exempt from worshipping the Idol of Caesar. Now they had a rival in Christian faith. Christians consistently refused to pay homage to the idols. This has led to a lot a betrayal and rivalry between the two faiths. It was not uncommon for Jews to betray their fellow Jews in Christ as a heretic who were then led to the lions and coliseums as sport objects. It is this Jesus referring to in this passage. Jesus gives the Church the authority and status to sit with him on the throne at the White Throne where Jewish will acknowledge that the Church is the bride of the Christ.

Rev 3:10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

This is a clear reference to fact that those who are victorious in the Philadelphia Church Era will be kept from the trial - the great tribulation- that is going to come upon the whole world. This verse then indicates that the rapture of the church is place between the Philadelphian and Laodecian Church Era. The sequence of the thought patter is evidently of Jesus' second coming and of the rapture which is preceded by the great tribulation. Soon after that comes the Great White Throne where the Church Raptured and made perfect shares in the glory of Jesus.

Rev 3:11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

Notice the reference to the crown which necessarily refers to the position of Church raptured.

Rev 3:8 I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.

The open door

Matthew 7:7-8, Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks will receive, and anyone who seeks will find, and the door will be opened to one who knocks.

Luke 11: 5-10, And Jesus said to his disciples, "Suppose one of you should go to a friend's house at midnight and say, 'Friend, let me borrow three loaves of bread. A friend of mine who is on a trip has just come to my house, and I don't have food to share!' And suppose your friend should answer from inside, 'Don't bother me! The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' Well, what then? I tell you that even if your friend will not get up and give you bread because you are a friend, yet your friend will get up and give you everything you need because you are not ashamed to keep on asking. And so I say to you: Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who seeks will find, and the door will be opened to anyone who knocks."

Revelation 4:1 At this point I had another vision and saw an open door in heaven. [proceeds to tell vision of heavenly thrones and creatures worshipping God.]

John 10:7-8, "So Jesus said again, "I am telling you the truth; I am the gate for the sheep. All others who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever comes in by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture."

Luke 13:22-30 Jesus went through towns and villages, teaching the people and making his way toward Jerusalem. Someone asked him. "Sir, will just a few people be saved?" Jesus answered them, "Do your best to go in through the narrow door; because many people will surely try to in but will not be able. The owner of the house will get up and close the door; then when you stand outside and begin to knock on the door and say, 'Open the door for us!' you will be answered, 'I don't know where you come from!' Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you; you taught in our town!' But the owner will say again, 'I don't know where you come from. Get away from me, all you wicked people!' How you will cry and gnash your teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the Reign of God, while you are thrown out! People will come from the

east and the west, from the north and the south and sit down at the feast in the Reign of God. Then those who are now last will be first, and those who are now first will be last."

Matthew 23:13-14 "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You lock the door to the Realm of heaven in people's faces, but you yourselves don't go in, nor do you allow in those who are trying to enter!"

Acts 12:12-16 Aware of his situation [Peter has been rescued from prison by an angel of God], he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. Peter knocked at the outside door, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer it. She recognized Peter's voice and was so happy that she ran back in without opening the door, and announced that Peter was standing outside. "You are crazy!" they told her. But she insisted that it was true. So they answered, "It is his angel." Meanwhile Peter kept on knocking. At last they opened the door, and when they saw him, they were amazed.

John 20:19-26 It was late that Sunday evening, and the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors, because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities. Then Jesus came and stood among them. "Peace be with you," he said. After saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord... [Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on them. Thomas is not there and doubts.] A week later the disciples were together again indoors, and Thomas was with them. The doors were locked, but Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

Philadelphia being at the cross roads of east and west was an opportunity of witnessing through their contacts and hospitality to many who passed that way. An open house of love for those who pass by is a sure way of expressing your love and hence convincing way of Christian expression and evangelization. Jesus within their hearts, each believer becomes a door - a means of salvation for others. These doors will be taken away once the rapture has taken place.

Dispensationally this modern era has found tremendous missionary movements which is the necessary condition for the end of the ages. All men may have a fair opportunity to hear the word so that when judging he may be fair. Mission fields are getting opened in unreachable areas. But time is close when it will be shut and a new period of dispensation will usher in.

From phileo, to love and adelphos, brother.

1 Peter 1:22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, (philadelphia) fervently love one another from the heart,

2 Peter 1:5-7 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, (philadelphia) and in your brotherly kindness, love.

Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; (philadelphia) give preference to one another in honor;

1 Thessalonians 4:9 Now as to the love of the brethren, (philadelphia) you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

Hebrews 13:1 Let the love of the brethren (philadelphia) continue.

John 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Contrast this with another love Philarguria - the love of silver . (phileo= to love ; arguros= silver)

While Philadelphia brings heaven down to earth Philarguria brings hell.

1 Timothy 6:5-10 and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

1 Tim 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Now he tells the church, beginning in verse 8, how he will use this power to open and shut. All missionary activities are directed by Jesus himself through the Holy Spirit. We have several examples of these in the Acts of Apostles.

On his second missionary journey he tried to go into the province of Asia to preach the gospel but was forbidden by the Holy Spirit; it was a shut door. Then he tried to go into Bithynia, on the southern shore of the Black Sea, but was not allowed to go in - another shut door. But when he came to Troas he had a vision of a man from Macedonia, and he learned that the Lord had opened a door for him into Europe. .

Three Names

I will write on him the name of my God

and

the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God;

and

I will also write on him my new name.

This again refers to the Pillars that are found in the Philadelphian High ways where the emperor honored the citizens for their great services. On it were written the Emperors name in large letters, then the name of the city and then the name of the citizen who is honored. Often he is given a new title. Christians of course where a group with very little power. But comforts them by saying that his honoring will be far more greater than those writings on the pillars. You will become a pillar which will eternally standing. When a person is born again he becomes a new creation and Jesus gives him a new name.

Chapter Ten

LAODECIA

Situated in the inner part of the Aegean Region, is Denizli, a tourist attraction city with its numerous beauty.

Dating back to the Calcholithic age, this was the site of a settlement of the earliest communities, and changed hands continuously, becoming the center of various civilizations in different time periods. The city is still the subject of excavations.

Rev. 3:14-22



Laodicea

The city is located in the Lycus River Valley together with Hierapolis and Colossae. This valley is a natural route of travel from east to west.

The city was founded by the Seleucid king Antiochus II and named for his wife Laodice about 260 B.C.



Aqueduct

The water that was piped to Laodicea was rich with calcium which over time would cause the pipes to clog. The engineers designed the aqueduct with vents covered with stones that could be removed periodically for cleaning.

Jesus' condemnation of the city's church for lukewarmness rebukes not their lack of fervor but their lack of effectiveness.

Stadium

One of the few stadiums preserved from the ancient world, this one at Laodicea was built by Nicostratus and dedicated to Vespasian in 79 A.D. according to an inscription found here.

The stadium is circular at both ends and was the total complex was 900 feet long. Used primarily for running races, the length of the track was fixed at 600 feet, also known as one stadium.



Excavations

A small-scale excavation of the site was carried out 1961-63 by a Canadian team led by Jean des Gagniers. The focus of their work was on the nymphaeum which was supplied water from the Baspinar Spring by an aqueduct that still survives. The nymphaeum was dated to the early 3rd century A.D.

"Ephesian Gate"

This triple-arched gateway was dedicated to Domitian (81-96). Apparently Laodicea received the gospel not from Paul but from his helper Epaphras during the time Paul was in Ephesus. Paul wrote the church here a letter during his first Roman imprisonment. This letter is not known historically and some have suggested that it is the letter now known as Ephesians.

Laodicea lies at a major crossroads in the valleys of Asia Minor, in what today is Turkey. The city was situated on a hill overlooking fertile valleys and majestic mountains. In Roman times, the city was an important center for administration and commerce. Court cases from the region were heard at Laodicea and funds were placed in the city's banks for safekeeping. Although damaged by earthquakes during the reign of Augustus (27 B.C.-A.D.14) and again in A.D. 60, the city kept rebuilding and prospering.

Laodicea was a center for the regional textile industry. The sheep that grazed in the nearby valleys produced a black wool that was exceptionally soft. The wool was bought and sold in the city's markets.



Zeus

Zeus, often called "Savior" because of the benefits he was said to provide, was one of the principal deities worshiped in Laodicea. Zeus was the highest of the gods in the traditional Greek pantheon.



Apollo, the son of Zeus, was known for sending messages through oracles. There was a shrine to Apollo at Claros. Delegations from Laodicea would go to the shrine each year seeking guidance from Apollo.

Rev 3:14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

Rev 3:15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!

Rev 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

Rev 3:17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

Rev 3:19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

Rev 3:20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

Rev 3:21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Rev 3:22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

The name Laodikeia comes from two words Lao=people and decia = justice.. So Laodicea means = "justice for the people" It was founded by Antiochus II between 260 and 246 BC, and was named in honor of his wife, Laodice. But Laodice afterwards poisoned Antiochus. This is the same Antiochus who formed the marriage league with Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, in fulfillment of Daniel 11:6.

The city was located about forty miles southeast of Philadelphia and one hundred miles east of Ephesus. Situated on the river Lycus not far from Colosse it was surrounded by rich farming area which provided for the city in abundance. But its importance comes from its position. Laodicea was on the crossroads between the important Ionian cities of that time. This produced a vigorous trade center and a banking capital. As a result people became very wealthy. Laodicea was mostly populated with Syrians and Jews transported from Babylon. Jews like their counter parts elsewhere in the world - because of their hard work and cleverness - controlled most of the trade and commerce in the city. It is assessed that there were over 7,500 Jewish families at the time this letter was written. Cicero is known to have lived in this city around 50 BC. In AD 60 an earthquake destroyed the city and the citizens were able to rebuild it without the help of Rome. In AD 66 the city was destroyed by another earthquake and was rebuilt by Marcus Aurelius.

Laodicea was the headquarters of medical practices of that period. Sitting on a volcanic mountain side the city had a number of hot, cold, and lukewarm springs. Most of these waters contained large number of minerals and was supposed have healing properties. These provided the rich with a series of health resorts which were supervised by a leading physician. Thousands of sick people journeyed to Laodicea to these spas to benefit from the medical treatments offered by the physicians, the eye salve, the mineral water, and the hot and lukewarm springs. Although the water was pleasing to the body, it was nauseating to drink.

In this rich city was a rich Christian Church.

Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

Jesus introduces himself to this church with three epithets.

Amen - The ultimate realization of all promises of God to mankind.

John 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

What Jesus is saying is that he will come back to give to each person the justice that is merited - Laodicea. This is emphasized in the second epithet of **faithful and true**

witness. Jesus is faithful but he is the witness to all men. It is the rejection or acceptance of Jesus that ultimately decided everyone's fate. He is also the **Ruler of all God's creation.** He is the judge because all authority in heaven and earth are given to Jesus.

Mat 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

John 5:22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,

Rev 3:15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!

Rev 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

Laodecian Church was a luke warm Church. But they did do a lot of good works. They were active in social uplifting and community projects etc. They expected to be justified by their works apart from Jesus. The cross was missing. They knew of the lukewarm springs which were not nauseating to drink. Like those waters Jesus says he will have to spit them out - reject them out from his choice. In spiritual matters we need to make a choice. We cannot be neutral. You must either reject or accept the demands of Jesus. There are only two classes of people. Those who are saved and those who are not saved. There is no purgatory business here. The lukewarmness of the churches around the world is the result of well being. They feel no necessity . Growth always comes through conflict in a sinful world. This is why Adam was given the blessing upon the fall

Gen 3:18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

Only in an unfallen state can conflict be eliminated without harm. Until then every man have this choice which he should make.

Rev 3:17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

Jesus talking to the rich Laodicians in their own terms. They were proud of their riches and great acquisitions. Such prosperity develops an antipathy to spiritual matters.

Deu 8:17 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today. 19 If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed. 20 Like the nations the LORD destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the LORD your God.

Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

The city was also noted for the black cloth manufactured there from black wool produced in the valley. The wool was glossy black and of a soft texture almost like silk and famous throughout the whole region. Black garments were almost universally worn by the Laodiceans and it symbolized their social status. They also wore gold ornaments. Christ advised the Christians of the city to buy of Him, "gold refined in the fire, and white clothes to wear". The people of Laodicea were familiar with the white toga worn by Roman citizens and officials. Only the Roman citizens were privileged to wear this white garment and it was a high honor. It was symbol of victory and authority. They were the rulers. In the Bible white represents purity and righteousness. Jesus asks the Laodiceans to wear the imputed righteousness of Jesus so that they become victors and rulers of the earth. Come and be part of the King who is coming to judge.

We have elsewhere referred to the School of Medicine and Aesculapius. There were over two hundred Temples of Karu dedicated to Aesculapius, the Greek god of medicine. In this temple they made the famous Phygian eye salve, called collyrium. Jesus the Great Physician, prescribes to this the spiritually blind Laodiceans to buy eye salve from Him that they might have spiritual vision instead of the eye salve from the heather gods.

Rev 3:19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

In the midst of plenty and abundance Jesus says he will rebuke and discipline so that they may bring forth repentance. Rebuke and disciplining in the lives of Christians are meant to produce repentance and growth. This gives us the insight for one of the reasons for pain and suffering.

Heb 12:5 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. :9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. 14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Rev 3:20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

Rev 3:21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

This famous verse is used to show that Jesus is knocking at the doors of human heart. So he is. Why is it that Jesus the ruler of all creation standing outside and knock. He is the ruler. He has all the authority over all his creations. But he will not impose his authority on man's heart. Every man is given freedom of choice. It is a freedom He has given at the time of creation. In spite of all the evil that has come out this freedom, God is not going to take it away. It is something God respects - even when it hurts to His core. God is not a tyrant, nor man a victim. The reality of the incarnation and the cross is the statement of

this fact. Incarnation itself will be meaningless unless we understand this great truth. Jesus knocks at the heart. He will not open the door. The latch is given to man in the inside. If he opens it, Jesus promises to come in and have fellowship with him.

The consequence of this is that he gives the right to sit with Jesus on the throne.

Dispensationally this last Church represents the end time church which has gone apostate. They became powerful, wealthy and controlled the commerce. For it they have to become neither cold nor hot. They still hold on to the name. But they will never proclaim Jesus as Lord. Toleration of pagan religions and syncretism will be hall mark of this church. Everything is acceptable. At the end of this era is the white throne - the judgment seat of Jesus which will give justice to all men. Then the overcomers will be sitting with him on the throne. This again indicates a rapture long before the white throne.

Chapter Eleven

General Analysis

These seven letters we have examined follow a set pattern of writing. There are **Seven Key Elements in each letter** .

They are:

1. The meaning of the name of the church being addressed;
2. The title of Jesus, the author of the letter, each chosen relevant to the message to that particular church;
3. The commendation of the Church- Their strong points and merits;
4. The reproof and rebuke of things they failed in;
5. The exhortation and counsel specific to the condition of the particular church; relevant to the geography and history of the city;
6. The promise to the "overcomer";
7. The concluding phrase, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

The Meaning of Names

Ephesus:	The Desired One: full purposed
Smyrna:	Myrrh; Offering of Sacrifice
Pergamos:	Much Married; Adulterous
Thyatira:	Sacrifice of Labor
Sardis:	Remnant
Philadelphia:	Brotherly Love
Laodicea:	Justice to People; Judgment

Though these names are actual geographical names of the churches referred to, the characteristics of the churches are represented in the meanings themselves. They are also prophetic in terms of the dispensational approach.

Titles that Jesus uses

General Title: I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Ephesus:	who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands
Smyrna:	the First and the Last, who died and came back to life again.
Pergamos:	who has the sharp double-edged sword
Thyatira:	Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.
Sardis:	who holds seven spirits of God and the seven stars.
Philadelphia:	who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. One who opens the door which no one can shut.

Laodicea: the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

Commendations

Ephesus: deeds, hard work, perseverance, endured hardship, did not tolerate wicked men

Smyrna: through affliction and poverty did not leave faith

Pergamos: among the Satanists kept the faith and did not renounce faith

Thyatira: deeds, love and faith, service and perseverance

Sardis: deeds

Philadelphia: deeds, kept the word, did not deny my name

Laodicea: deeds

Reproof

Ephesus: forsaken their first love

Smyrna:

Pergamos: teaching of Balaam
teaching of Nicolaitans

Thyatira: tolerates Jezebel

Sardis: dead

Philadelphia:

Laodicea: neither hot nor cold and is lukewarm

Counsel

Ephesus:	remember your first love, repent and do the things you did first
Smyrna:	be faithful to the point of death
Pergamos:	repent, otherwise I will come and fight against them
Thyatira:	hold on to what you have until I come
Sardis:	Remember what you have received and heard; obey it and repent
Philadelphia:	Hold on to what you have
Laodicea:	buy from me gold refined in fire so you can be rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your nakedness; and slave to put on your eyes so that you can see

Promise to the overcomers

Ephesus:	I will give the right to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God.
Smyrna:	Will not be hurt at all by the second death.
Pergamos:	I will give some of the hidden manna, I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.
Thyatira:	I will give him the authority over the nations. I will give him the morning star.
Sardis:	They will walk with me, dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge him before my Father and his angels.

	I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it.
Philadelphia:	I will write on him the name of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down from heaven from my God; I will also write on him my new name.
Laodicea:	I will give the right to sit with me on my throne.

Corresponding Dispensation Age and the Parable

Ephesus:	Apostolic Period: sowing of the seeds till 100 AD
Smyrna:	Persecution Period Parable of the Weeds
Pergamos:	State Church Period Parable of Mustard Seed
Thyatira:	Period of Heresy Parable of the Leaven
Sardis:	Reformation Period Parable of the Hidden Treasure
Philadelphia:	Missionary Period Parable of the Great Pearl
Laodicea:	End time Apostate Church Period The Parable of the Drag Net



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This is the secret of the Seven Stars and the Seven Lampstands. The Seven Churches are in Space. The Seven Churches are in Time - an unfolding of the History of the Church.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

